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JOHN DORRIEN:

A NOVEL.

BY

JULIA KAVANAGH,

AUTHOR OF

"NATHALIE," "ADELE," "BESSIE," "DORA," ETC.

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JOHN DORRIEN.

CHAPTER I.

It was six o'clock, and quite dark, October being the time of the year, and yet Mrs. Dorrien, who was to have been home by five, had not come back from town. Johnny, as he sat perched up on his high chair, looking down at the fire in the grate before him, wondered rather anxiously what kept his mother out so late. We call him Johnny because he was only ten years old, and a very little fellow, too, for that time of life. He was not a fine boy, nor yet a handsome one. He was undersized, to begin with, and his little face was thin and pale—the face of a child who stays too much within. Even the firelight, which showed so plainly the turned-up nose and pointed chin, could not pretend to give the glow of health to what it lit up. And yet, seen by that fitful light—there was none other in the room, Johnny being strictly forbidden to touch the petroleum-oil lamp—it had a quaint charm of its own. The brow, around which clustered rich brown curls, was firmly and finely moulded. The eyes, of a dark gray, were so beautiful, so full of light and fire, and yet so deep and tender, that, if you had seen them once, you never forgot them again, even as the mobile, expressive countenance never left your memory when you had once watched its wonderful play. In repose it had not much to recommend it to favor, for it owed nothing to color or to clear, fine outline. His beautiful eyes, and the little, eager, passionate soul that lived in his frail body, and shone out through them, gave Johnny his only claim to that dower of beauty which the sons and daughters of Adam would all so gladly possess.

He now sat on his high chair, his short legs dangling down, an open book on his knee. He was looking, as we said, at the fire, wondering why his mother did not come back; also listening to the kettle's low song, and waiting patiently till some bright flame should shoot up and let him go on with "Aladdin's Lamp." It came at length—a magic flame, that took him straight into the wonderful garden, where Aladdin, *alias* Johnny, plucked rubies, sapphires, and emeralds, to his heart's content. That flame lit up to advantage the room in which the boy sat. The low ceiling showed that it belonged to a second floor; but it looked a pleasant room, for all that. In that bright yet uncertain light there was no detecting the worn carpet, the faded damask curtains, the tarnished gilding of the frames on the wall. Every thing looked warm and pleasant, and every thing, after a fashion, was so. Mrs. Dorrien had been affluent once, and had preserved some relics of better days. A few pictures, some good china, an old Japanese cabinet, adorned her second-floor sitting-room. Moreover, she had a woman's art in making the best of every thing; and, if Mrs. Dorrien had lived in a garret, she would have contrived so that it should not look a depressing one.

The flame, by suddenly dying away, took Johnny out of the marvelous garden, where trees bore precious stones by way of fruit, to the dim world of a London room. The water in the kettle was boiling now, and surely Mrs. Dorrien must soon return.

"I think I shall make the tea," said Johnny, talking aloud to himself. He led a rather lonely life, and had acquired that habit.

So, jumping down from his chair, he climbed up on another, to reach down the tea-caddy from the *chiffonnier;* and, in doing so, he knocked down an old china teacup and saucer on the floor, where they were at once shattered to pieces.

"Oh! what will mamma say?" cried Johnny, bursting into tears—"oh! what will she say?"

For the cup was not merely valuable in itself, but it had been the gift of his dear father to his mother, and, of all her relics of the past, it was perhaps that which she held most dear.

The question of what Mrs. Dorrien would say was soon

solved. Johnny was still sobbing bitterly over the fragments of the teacup, when the door opened, and his mother entered the room.

"Johnny!" she cried, in an alarmed voice, "what is the matter? Are you hurt?—what is it?"

"Oh! I—I have broken the—the cup," sobbed Johnny, desperately. "I wanted to make the tea, and I broke it."

"But you are not hurt?" said his mother, anxiously.

"No; but I wanted to make the tea, and—"

Here Johnny gave way to another burst of sorrow.

Mrs. Dorrien could have cried, too, for the loss of her cup, if the relief of finding that Johnny had come to no harm had not been the stronger feeling of the two. She never left him—and she had to leave him often—but she thought, "What will happen to him while I am out?" And she never opened her own door when she came home that her heart did not throb with a nameless fear. So, though the cup was broken, it was a relief to find Johnny safe and sound. Mrs. Dorrien lit the lamp, and Johnny, picking up the pieces of the broken cup and saucer, placed them on the table before his mother, and, looking up eagerly in her face, asked if they could not be mended.

"I am afraid not, my dear," she replied, sadly. "What is there that, being once broken, can really be mended in this world?"

With which despondent remark Mrs. Dorrien seemed to dismiss the subject of the broken cup, and, taking off her cloak and bonnet, made the tea.

Johnny's mother had married late in life, and was now forty-five. She had been lovely in her youth, and was pretty still, with a fresh color, and very black hair and eyes. She was an active, energetic woman, and, when her husband's death left her and Johnny, then one year old, destitute, she scarcely gave herself time to grieve before she sought for the means of earning a livelihood. She had been reared in comfort, she had never worked unless for her pleasure; but she fought the battle of life, when her turn came to do so, as bravely as if she had been brought up in the din of that fierce war where the strong never think of sparing the weak. For seven years she had struggled on, taking up and dropping various trades on the way, until she had at length found what, after some pover-

ty, seemed a handsome competence, in the coloring of photographs. She had been this day to town on business, and Johnny, her sole friend and confidant, now questioned her concerning her success while they took their tea; a late dinner, or, in plain speech, more than one substantial meal a day, being out of the question for Mrs. Dorrien and Johnny.

"Little mother"—he always called her so—"did you get that order?" he asked, fastening his brilliant, searching eyes on her face.

"Yes, dear, I did. It is such a relief to be sure of that money! We are going to be quite rich now. And what have you been doing, Johnny?"

"Well, little mother, I learned my lessons, of course, and then I read about Aladdin. And oh! little mother, if I only had his lamp, how I would rub and rub it again, and give you heaps of every thing—such heaps!" cried Johnny, bursting out into a peal of joyous, triumphant laughter; "and then," he resumed, relapsing into sudden gravity, "you need never color photographs no more."

"Any more," corrected Mrs. Dorrien, a little sharply. "I wish you would talk correctly. Your father was a gentleman, and a thorough scholar, as I have often told you. Give me your Latin grammar."

"I know my Latin lesson, little mother, indeed I do; but learning it in that French grammar of L'Homond's makes it so difficult," pleaded Johnny.

"Nonsense! Your father spoke French like a Frenchman; and learning Latin in a French grammar is the very best thing for you."

Johnny handed her L'Homond, and went through his task very creditably. At least his mother, who had to study her own lesson—and hard work she found it—before she heard him repeat his, expressed herself satisfied.

"And you will teach me Greek, little mother, will you not?" asked Johnny, with sparkling eyes.

"No, my dear, I cannot."

"But you said I was to know Greek," he cried, in blank disappointment.

"Well, I do hope that you will know it," replied Mrs. Dorrien. "Your father knew Greek thoroughly, I have been told, and so must you be a good Greek scholar.

Only "—here Mrs. Dorrien's voice faltered, and her black eyes, though there was not much tenderness in them, rested very fondly on her boy—"only, my dear little lad, I must send you to school. I have not the knowledge, and I have not the time, to teach you myself. I must send you to school."

Johnny's color came and went.

"To a day-school?" he suggested.

"No, dear, to a boarding-school."

Johnny's lip twitched and his little pale face lengthened visibly; but he was brave by nature, and had been accustomed by his mother to much self-restraint, so he only said:

"Is the school far away, little mother?"

"Very far away, my dear."

"Twenty miles?" suggested Johnny.

"My dear, it is not in England," replied his mother, a little nervously; and, to get rid at once of the bitter subject, she informed him that she was going to send him to a boarding-school on the coast of France, and as, though she expected and received unquestioning obedience, she was never unwilling to give good reason for what she did, Mrs. Dorrien explained to Johnny why she had taken and now acted upon this resolution.

"You see, my darling," she said, with a sigh, "it is all very well for me to color photographs, but you must have a classical education, and be a gentleman as your father was. You must be an accomplished man," said Mrs. Dorrien, warming with her subject—"equal to any position. Perhaps you will have to color photographs after all," she added, with a touch of bitterness; "but one thing I will do for you: I will give you an education fit for a peer's son. I cannot do it in this country, but there is a place on the French coast called Saint-Ives, where living is almost for nothing, and schooling—good schooling—is amazingly cheap. I shall keep you there for a few years, and, cheap though it is, I need not tell you how heavy a sacrifice it will be for me to do this. Only, Johnny, bear in mind that, if you do not work hard—very hard, mind you—I might just as well keep you here and save the money."

"I will work hard," said Johnny, in a low voice.

"I want you to have a gentleman's education," resumed

Mrs. Dorrien, with a persistency which showed how bitterly she felt her downfall in the world, "because you must be a gentleman. If you should have to color photographs, Greek and Latin will not prevent you from doing it; and if, as I trust, you will have some better work to do, why, they can only help you with that work. But know them you shall—that is, if you will learn," she added, giving him a sharp look.

"Indeed, little mother, I will," protested Johnny, who was ready to cry from very earnestness.

"French you will learn, of course; English you will keep up with the English teacher; and if I can afford it, you shall study German. Your father knew every language in Europe—Russian excepted."

If Mrs. Dorrien had there and then asked him to include Russian in his studies, Johnny would have said yes without hesitation. They were wholly unlike in person, mind, and temper, but ambition was common to both mother and son.

"Of course you will have many things to learn besides Greek and Latin," resumed Mrs. Dorrien, after a pause. "I suppose you cannot excel in all—"

"Why not, if I try?" interrupted Johnny, his little face kindling all over with excitement.

"You must try," decisively said his mother; "but of course you cannot excel in all; only, Johnny, you must not fail entirely in any thing that you do attempt. It would half break my heart; for, what with the money and the being left alone, I do not know how I shall bear it all!"

Mrs. Dorrien took out her pocket-handkerchief and began to cry, but no sooner did Johnny attempt to follow her example than she checked her own tears, and dried his with an emphatic "Nonsense!" Then, as if repenting the harshness of her tone, she bade the lad come and sit by her on the sofa—it was Johnny's bed at night—and, with her arm caressingly passed round his neck, she spoke to him about the school to which she was sending him, and gave him every particular concerning its head, teachers, and management, which she had been able to ascertain.

"You see, Johnny," said Mrs. Dorrien, "the head of that school is the Abbé Véran—one of the most learned men in France, I am told. It is a school of the highest

class, though very cheap (of course it is very dear for my means, but never mind that), and the teachers belonging to it are first rate. The abbé is a rich man, and does not want to make money by his pupils. He wants to make GREAT SCHOLARS of them," said Mrs. Dorrien, speaking in capitals.

Johnny opened his eyes wide and nodded.

"So when they are stupid or idle he turns them out at the end of a year," coolly remarked Mrs. Dorrien, giving Johnny a sharp look.

The boy looked more excited than alarmed at the implied threat. His little, eager face plainly said that he did not mean to be turned out by the Abbé Véran.

"He turned out a great many last year, I am told," resumed Mrs. Dorrien, drawing a little upon her imagination for the latter fact, "'because,' as he properly remarks, 'why should I, who have established this school—not for profit, but for the honor of the thing—why should I keep boys so stupid or so idle that they would only disgrace my teaching?' Of course it takes some interest to get into a school of that kind; and if Mr. Perry had not answered for you, also if you had not been the child of Catholic parents, you could not have been admitted."

"O mother!" cried Johnny, turning white, "will Mr. Perry give you no more photographs to color if—if I do not please the abbé?"

Mrs. Dorrien had a great mind to say that such would be Mr. Perry's undoubted line of action if Johnny did not behave himself at school; but her heart relented at the frightened look of the child, and she hoped that Mr. Perry would not be quite so severe. Indeed, thinking that she might have gone too far, she proceeded to give him quite a glowing account of the beautiful place he was going to, and of the happy life he was to lead there.

"And when do we go, little mother?" asked Johnny.

"You go this day week," answered Mrs. Dorrien, looking at the fire.

"Don't you come with me?" he asked, in blank dismay.

"I can't, dear."

Johnny looked up in his mother's face, as if he could scarcely trust his ears. She had been so jealous of his personal safety that she had rarely allowed him to go to the end of the street alone, and now she was sending him

across the sea "all alone by himself," as Johnny said in his own thoughts. But even this solitary journey to a strange land was nothing to what followed.

"And shall I come back all alone, too, for the holidays?" asked Johnny, wistfully.

"I must try to go and see you for the holidays," answered his mother; but she looked at the fire again.

Johnny was truth itself; to tell no lies cost him no effort, and as he was, so he held all others to be. Words spoken by his mother especially were to him as certain realities as if they had been uttered by the fair goddess who lives in a well; but if he was truthful and trusting, he was also singularly penetrating for so young a child, and he now looked at his mother in sore perplexity. She said that she must try to go and see him, and therefore that must be true; and yet Johnny knew that she had no intention of trying—that she would never come, and that his holidays were to be spent in solitude. He was too young to say as much to himself in the clear speech which thought utters to us in our riper years, but he felt it, and the feeling it was that which brought to his face that earnest, perplexed look before which his mother shrank. Poor woman! she liked truth well enough, and, to do her justice, practised it nine times out of the ten; but when truth would be a stumbling-block in her path, why, she stepped aside, and asked of herself, "How could I help it?" Truth in the present case she considered one of these stumbling-blocks, and therefore she looked at the fire.

Johnny was much depressed, and his mother, not knowing how to cheer him, decreed, in her peremptory way, that he was cross and sleepy, and must go to bed. Johnny submitted; it never occurred to him to dispute her will. Accordingly, the sofa was turned down, and Johnny, having said his prayers and undressed, was tucked in; but he could not sleep, and the look of his large, brilliant eyes never left his mother. She came and stood over him, half fond, half reproving.

"I wonder where you get your eyes from?" she said, smiling down at his little pale face. "They are not like mine—they are not like your father's. They are Irish eyes. I believe you had an Irish great-grandmother. I suppose the eyes came from her."

Johnny had no doubt on the subject, having heard his mother utter the above remark a hundred times, at least.

"Well, they are lovely eyes," resumed Mrs. Dorrien, with a sigh, "and clever eyes, too; and if you don't learn, Johnny, I shall always say the fault was yours."

"But I will learn—indeed I will, little mother," cried Johnny, with strong symptoms of forthcoming tears.

"Hush!" said Mrs. Dorrien—"go to sleep directly," and to enforce her commands by the aid of darkness, she carried away the lamp to the next room, where she at once busied herself in looking over Johnny's clothes. At first Johnny's mother saw very well that three little shirts were past mending, and that there was no cure to the frayed edges of two white collars; but after a while there came such a mist over her eyes that she saw nothing more. The natural grief which she had hidden and repressed now overpowered her; her poor hands shook as she put away one of Johnny's silk neckties, and remembered that other hands than her own would have to settle and tie it round the neck of her boy for many a day to come—unless, indeed, as was most likely, his own little awkward hands were left to perform that office.

"Oh! how can I do without him?—how can I?" thought the poor mother, sinking down on a chair by the side of her bed, and burying her face in her pillow, that Johnny might not hear her sobbing. "I could be so happy alone with him in a desert! How can I let him go away from me? Must I let others nurse him when he is ill, and must I die, perhaps, and not see him again? My boy, my Johnny, all that is left to me out of my poor wasted life, how can I do it?"

Cruel, bitter question! But, though Mrs. Dorrien was not a high-minded woman, she had, as we have already said, plenty of courage and energy. Grief and repining being utterly useless, she now bade them begone. Maternal ambition, the feeling that she was sacrificing her own happiness for that of her darling, and a firm faith that, if she surrendered her child to the keeping of Providence, the trust would be redeemed, gave her strength to bear this sorrow. She raised her face from her pillow, she returned to the survey of Johnny's clothes, and, when it was at length time for her to go to bed, she only allowed her-

self one indulgence—that of going to look at her sleeping boy.

But Johnny was not asleep; his bright eyes were open, his cheeks were flushed. "Little mother," he said, excitedly, "I will be a great scholar, I will indeed. And you need not be afraid of Mr. Perry, and I will earn plenty of money for you when I grow up and—"

"Hush, darling, you must sleep," soothingly said his mother.

She kissed him fondly, she sat down by his side, she took his little fevered hands in her own, she talked to him coaxingly, and little by little she led his thoughts away from the school and Mr. Perry.

"You were talking to me about Aladdin, were you not?" said Mrs. Dorrien. "What were you saying, Johnny?"

"Oh! little mother, I was saying that, if I had his lamp, I would rub and rub it till you should have heaps and heaps of gold, and—"

"There, that will do," interrupted Mrs. Dorrien, vexed to see the excited look coming back to his eyes; "I wish Mr. Perry had never given you that book. Shut your eyes and go to sleep, child. People can always fall asleep, if they will only shut their eyes."

Obedient Johnny closed his eyes, and was indeed very fast asleep ere long. But, alas for Mrs. Dorrien's infallible recipe! In vain she tried its efficacy that night. Sleep came not to her until long after gray morning had stolen into her room.

CHAPTER II.

It is bitter to linger over a parting, and there is no need for us to linger over this one. The week has gone by pitilessly swift in its course, thought Johnny's mother. She had worked night and day at his little outfit, she had drained her scanty resources almost dry, that he might want for nothing, and she had gone down to Newhaven to see him on board the steamer that was to bear him away

and commended him to the care of captain and steward, with a sharp sort of earnestness that plainly said, "You have nothing on board your boat so valuable as my boy." And, having done this, Mrs. Dorrien had kissed Johnny, strictly forbidden him to cry, and left him to all appearance for the purpose of taking the train, and going straight home to Kensington, and there resuming that coloring of photographs which his departure had sadly interrupted. In reality, Mrs. Dorrien had retired to the gloom of a dingy corner of the station, and thence she watched the little solitary figure that stood on the deck, so little and so lonely in its plain gray suit, and with its leather bag strapped round its tiny body, the little figure and pale face that were all in all to her. She did not see them long. There was a great stir, a great confusion, and no little noise; then the steamer glided away, and when it could be seen no more, even by her straining eyes, Mrs. Dorrien took the train, and went home—if that place whence her boy was gone could be called home now. Sadly and silently, with her veil down, she went home, a lonely, childless mother.

Never, in all the ten years of his little life, had Johnny felt so forlorn as he felt when he found himself standing alone on the deck of the boat that was bearing him away to a strange country. He did not cry, he had promised his mother that he would not, and the somewhat severe discipline to which Mrs. Dorrien had subjected him had done him this much good, that he could restrain the manifestation of his feelings; but he looked around him slowly and wistfully, with that gravity of aspect which is so remarkable an attribute of childhood.

Mrs. Dorrien little suspected that by thus sending her boy adrift she had in a great measure shaken the very foundations of his moral world. Johnny had not been a spoiled child, nor yet an indulged one; but he had been cared for, and watched over, as spoiled and pampered children are not always. Mrs. Dorrien washed him, combed him, dressed and undressed him, with her own hands. She learned Latin to teach it to him, no book ever met his eyes without first being read by her, and no child was allowed to say a word to Johnny until Mrs. Dorrien had sifted him thoroughly, and, as she said herself, "turned him inside out." Johnny did not grow up very like his mother, in mind or in temper, for

all that, but he grew up in blind reliance on her superior wisdom and judgment. And now she had left him, nay, she had sent him forth, and Johnny felt in the condition of a fledgling whom the parent-bird has just turned out of the nest. He did not say in thought that he must rely on himself alone for the future, but such was his feeling; and as Johnny, though quick and susceptible, did not belong to the tribe of the weak, but to that of the strong, on that feeling he was to act henceforth. The bond, the great bond between him and his mother, was really broken from that hour of their first parting. To his dying day he loved her fondly, but he never gave her back the authority she had relinquished by sending him among strangers.

Of this great change Johnny was so far conscious that, even while he looked about him with the keen, observant looks of childhood, he could not forget it. He saw the mighty waste of waters, the boats that glided along or shot across it, the spars of the shipping; he heard weird cries, strange sounds, and listened with horror to profane oaths, and all the time he also remembered his irresponsible position with a sort of awe, and was only amazed to see that other people did not seem to think any thing at all about it. Was the world really the same as it had been, now that he, Mrs. Dorrien's little boy, instead of sitting alone in their room on the second floor of the house in Kensington, studying Latin in L'Homond's grammar, or reading about Aladdin, was standing on that narrow deck alone, and looking about him with not a soul, so far as it appeared, to watch or control his actions? His mother, indeed, had commended him to a gentleman with a laced cap and a red nose, and, informing him that this was the captain, she had added, in her strict, imperative fashion:

"Mind you obey him, Johnny."

So when the boat was fairly on her way, and Johnny's drooping spirits so far revived that he felt hungry, he sidled up to that gentleman, and said, in his little shy voice, which was also a very sweet one—

"Please, sir, may I eat a biscuit now?"

"What?" said the red-nosed gentleman, staring down at him.

"Please, sir, may I eat a biscuit now?" reiterated Johnny.

"Yes, yes; go and ask the steward to give you one," was the hasty reply, for the captain had just raised his glass, and was looking through it.

"Oh! but I have got them in my leather bag," said Johnny—"seven Abernethy biscuits."

"Oh! you have them in your bag, have you?" said the captain, without removing his glass from his right eye—the left one was shut very tightly. "Then, in the name of patience, what do you want *me* to do for you?"

"Please, may I eat one?"

"Eat the whole lot of them, if you like, my man," replied the captain, with profound indifference.

Johnny became very red, and drew away abashed. He saw that he bored the captain, and he felt that he must trouble him no more. But he also saw, and he could scarcely realize the awful fact, that he had entered a world where little boys could eat up seven Abernethy biscuits unchecked, unscolded, and—uncared for. Why, at that rate, there was no enormity which he, Johnny, Mrs. Dorrien's little boy, could not venture on now! He might tear his clothes, or spend his pocket-money, two shillings and sixpence, or buy and smoke cigars, or do any other of the immoral actions condemned in the decalogue of boyhood, and who would care to interfere? Not the captain! And this was what he had come to, he, Johnny, who had never walked five minutes alone in the streets of Kensington, he who, even in the pleasant Kensington Gardens, had never been out of the reach of his mother's watchful black eye! Truly, the world was an altered world since that morning sun had risen!

The conclusion of these philosophical reflections was that Johnny opened his leather bag, took out the other paper bag, in which his seven biscuits had been deposited by his careful mother, and instead of one biscuit, ate two. For, since he was to bear the burden, Johnny thought he might as well have the advantages of irresponsibility.

"All right now?" said the captain, nodding to him, and without waiting for an answer, he walked on.

The steward also gave Johnny a look, then the stewardess came and said a few words, then he was once more alone. The boat was out at sea now, land had vanished, a mild hazy sky bent over the smooth green waters, and long-winged white sea-birds flew screaming above them.

Every poem, every tale, every history Johnny had read now came back to him, and fired his little brain. Wicked sailors shooting holy albatrosses; brave young heroes crossing seas on romantic quests; noble Christopher Columbuses seeking new worlds—all were with him then, and somehow or other he was one and all of them. He had killed the albatross with his cross-bow; he was sailing in that huge boat, with its sails out, and its chimney smoking, in order to seek his fortune; and, above all, he was going to discover America with all his might, and to be carried in triumph by rebellious, penitent sailors, who wore low hats, and blue jackets, and flat collars, and the chief rebel of whom had a laced cap and a red nose.

Though Johnny, who had lived much alone, and thus become a great dreamer, indulged himself in these fancies, he found time and attention to bestow on his fellow-passengers. There was an old lady, who looked very poorly, he thought; then there were two tall men, who did nothing but walk up and down the deck, talking all the time; then there were three little children, who were either screaming or romping or tumbling about everybody's legs; and then there was a lad of twelve or thirteen, with whom Johnny fell in love at once. He was a handsome boy, with long, dark locks, soft and laughing dark eyes, and a bewitching countenance. But perhaps the black-velvet tunic which he wore fascinated Johnny as much as his beauty. "He must be a prince at the very least," thought the child, "to be so magnificently attired." And he watched him furtively, and, the more he looked at this beautiful stranger, the more was Johnny smitten. He liked every thing about him—the fashion in which he stood or sat or talked or laughed, showing teeth of pearl, was perfection in Johnny's eyes. And then he had such little white hands, like a girl's, and such dainty feet, in such wonderful little boots. He must be a prince. The prince was not alone. A handsome, white-haired, white-bearded man, with a jovial face, accompanied him, and watched Johnny's looks with great amusement. "Do you know that little fellow, Oliver?" he asked.

Oliver—such was the prince's name—turned his laughing dark eyes rather languidly toward Johnny, and answerd softly that he did not know the funny little chap.

"He is a funny little chap," resumed the white-haired gentleman, whose name was Blackmore, and who was the prince's papa; "and, what is more, he cannot take his eyes off you."

"Can't he?" said Oliver, still speaking softly, but looking by no means surprised or elated. "Well, his looks don't hurt me," he composedly added, and, giving Johnny a careless glance, he turned back to a distant contemplation of the man at the helm, which Mr. Blackmore's observations had interrupted.

Johnny, however, having become conscious that the white-haired and white-bearded gentleman was watching him, had suddenly withdrawn his looks from the prince, and bestowed them on the sea. He was not thinking about it; to say the truth, he was wondering if this beautiful creature in black velvet was bound, like himself, for Saint-Ives, and fondly hoping that such might be the case. He was already—being of an imaginative turn—constructing a pleasant romance on that slight foundation, when a voice at his elbow said:

"Well, and what do you think about it?"

It was Mr. Blackmore who spoke. Johnny started and blushed.

"About what, sir?" he asked.

"Why, about the sea that you are staring at so."

"I thought it was bigger," answered Johnny.

"Bigger!—you thought it was bigger! Had you never seen it before?"

No, Johnny had never seen the sea before, and he had thought it was bigger. He said it very simply, and without the least wish of being censorious, for all that Mr. Blackmore measured this mite of a thing from head to foot, burst out laughing; then, addressing the beautiful Oliver, who stood by his side, looking down benignantly at Johnny, he said, gayly:

"It thought the sea was bigger. What do *you* think of that, Oliver?"

But Oliver was too amiable to say what he thought, so he only smiled and showed his beautiful little teeth.

"That boy has the most extraordinary eyes for a child," resumed Mr. Blackmore.

"They are Irish eyes," promptly remarked Johnny—"my mother says so."

He was rather proud of his Irish eyes, though wholly innocent of attaching any personal value to them. Mr. Blackmore laughed again, and even Oliver looked amused.

"And do you really travel all alone?" resumed Mr. Blackmore, looking down with a careless sort of pity on the little gray figure sitting on the bench before him, with its pale, eager face turned up, and its short legs dangling helplessly. Yes, Johnny traveled all alone.

"And are you not afraid to go alone to France?"

"Oh, no! I am to wait on deck till the man comes for me."

"Like a parcel to be called for," said Mr. Blackmore, winking shrewdly.

Johnny colored up to the roots of his brown hair, and Mr. Blackmore went on with his catechising.

Was Johnny going to Dieppe? No. Then how far beyond Dieppe was he going?

"I am going to the great school of Saint-Ives," replied Johnny, proudly—for he began to think that this old gentleman was a very inquisitive one.

The amused expression died out of Mr. Blackmore's face, and even Oliver's rather languid countenance became suddenly interested as Johnny uttered the words "Saint-Ives." Father and son exchanged a look; they both gazed down at Johnny's little insignificant figure. Then Oliver colored faintly, and Mr. Blackmore whistled and said:

"Well done! So nothing less than Saint-Ives will answer you? No wonder you do not think the sea big enough."

Like all truthful children, Johnny was very simple; but spite his simplicity, he had an almost feminine quickness of perception, which often made clear to him many things beyond either his knowledge or his experience. In a moment it now seemed to be revealed to him that the young prince in black velvet was one of those unfortunate pupils who had been turned out of Saint-Ives; and this was so far true that the head of that establishment had, after giving the handsome Oliver a year's trial, advised his father to place him under other tuition.

"It was Mr. Perry who got me in," said Johnny, a little deprecatingly, and as if he thought it needful to apologize for his overweening ambition.

"Mr Perry! What Mr. Perry?"

And when Johnny in his innocence supplied the needful information, and Mr. Perry turned out to be a photographer in London, Mr. Blackmore smiled skeptically; but being too well-bred a man to contradict even a child, he only smiled, and, having had enough of Johnny by this, he walked to the other end of the deck, followed by his son.

"I say," said Oliver, laughing in his sweet, low voice, "just fancy that little soft chap thinking Mr. Perry got him into Saint-Ives."

"My dear boy," said Mr. Blackmore, good-humoredly, "it matters very little how that small boy gets in. The great thing is, not to get out of Saint-Ives as you did. Mark my words, that boy will stay."

"I should not wonder if he did," replied Oliver, looking wholly unmoved by the paternal censure. "I must go and have a talk with him."

Johnny, who had seen the prince depart with a pang of regret, now saw him return with a throb of shy joy. And nothing could be pleasanter and more winning than Oliver Blackmore's mode of beginning an acquaintance. It might be slightly patronizing, but Johnny did not detect that.

"My name is Oliver Blackmore," said he, sitting down by Johnny's side, and drawing up one of his legs to nurse it with graceful familiarity. "We have a château three leagues north of Saint-Ives—such a big place! They call it La Maison Rouge. My father bought it for the sake of the fishing; for there is a little river thick with fish that flows through our grounds. And I have a boat of my own, and, when you can get a holiday out of the abbé, why, you must come and see me, and I will take you in my boat, you know. And won't it be jolly!" added Master Oliver Blackmore, shaking his dark curls, and laughing with all the might of his laughing dark eyes in Johnny's face.

Jolly! Johnny was overpowered by the vision of bliss thus held forth, and could scarcely stammer out his glad thanks.

"And since you are going to Saint-Ives," continued Oliver, "please to give my best regards to Mr. Ryan. He is the dearest old brick you ever saw—an Irishman—and

such a brick! He teaches English at the abbé's. And also will you tell Madame Blanc, the *concierge*—that's the door-keeper, you know—that I kiss her on both cheeks? She was very fond of me, was Madame Blanc. For I was at Saint-Ives, you know; but they worked too hard there for me, I did not like it; and so my father brought me home, and Mr. Granby undertook me. He says I get on very well. You will like Mr. Granby, and he will give you some good hints, if I ask him. We have also the housekeeper's room at the château—I mean the jam-room. Do you like apricot-jam?"

Johnny modestly confessed that he was not acquainted with that dainty.

"Ain't you? Well, we have lots of it; and you can eat a whole pot, if you like. And now," negligently continued Oliver, leaning back, and so nursing his knee that he seemed inclined to suck it, "what's your name, and who are you?"

Johnny told him very simply the little there was to tell about himself. He was Johnny Dorrien, Mrs. Dorrien's little boy, and his father was dead, and he was going to Saint-Ives to work hard and be a great scholar, and it was Mr. Perry who had got him in.

"Now don't be green," said Oliver, laughing, and looking amused. "No one gets in that way at Saint-Ives. The old abbé is too sharp for that. Now, confess that he had a talk with you, and examined you, and made you go through your paces. I know he trotted me out finely."

"But I never saw him," replied Johnny, coloring up, and a little indignant to find his word doubted.

"Well, if you won't tell, you know, you won't," said Oliver, very coolly.

Johnny was ready to cry with mortification. Oliver stared at these signs of emotion, and so far relented in his skepticism as to remark that, if the abbé had not already examined Johnny, he certainly would do so, as he never took any one upon trust, and that he, Johnny, had better be prepared to go through a trying ordeal. But if Master Oliver Blackmore thought to appall Mrs. Dorrien's little boy by this awful prospect, he was wholly mistaken. Johnny's gray eyes sparkled, his little turned-up nose sniffed at

the thought of the encounter with the abbé, and his ambitious little heart swelled within him.

"That's right. I see you are game. I was," said Oliver, with an approving nod. "The old abbé poked me about—oh! I don't mean that he actually poked me," for Johnny had stared, "I mean that he tried to get me into a corner—well, I don't mean a real corner, you know—but you know what I mean," a little impatiently ejaculated Oliver, getting entangled in his own figures of speech; "and, though he did his best, I was game, and got through it. But I could not stand the work; it made my head ache."

"Oliver!" called Mr. Blackmore, from the other end of the deck, "come here."

"So, as I said," continued Oliver, without heeding this summons, "he will try and put you all wrong; and, if he does, he will pack you off home. But I'll tell you what you'll do if he does that; you'll come to me first, and—"

"Oliver!" called Mr. Blackmore again.

"And we'll have a jolly row in my boat," continued the imperturbable Oliver, "and Mr. Granby—"

"Oliver, are you coming?" called Mr. Blackmore a third time; and his voice was so angry that Oliver raised his eyebrows, and with the remark, "He's growling, I must go now," left Johnny to his reflections.

Mr. Blackmore, who was a passionate man, swore as Oliver came up to him.

"How dare you stay when I called you three times?" he asked, his angry eyes flashing.

Oliver, all innocence, protested that he had not heard himself called more than once.

"That's not true," said Mr. Blackmore, point-blank.

Oliver's calmness was not disturbed. There was nothing defiant, insolent, or audacious in his sweet face as his father thus taunted him with a lie, but calmness there was, the calmness of a nature which neither praise nor censure can reach.

"The little boy's name is John Dorrien," he said, after a pause. "His father is dead, and his mother colors photographs, and he is to come and see me."

Mr. Blackmore, who had had enough of the little boy, bade Oliver not bother; whereupon Oliver looked languidly at the sea, and spoke no more.

We said that Johnny was left to his reflections. These were brief. The stewardess came and pounced upon him, and took him down to feed him; then, somehow or other, he was smuggled into the ladies' cabin, and there a lady would make him take brandy-and-water to prevent sea-sickness, of which Johnny showed no symptoms; and the result of the above dose thus administered was that Johnny fell into a sudden and profound sleep.

When he woke the boat was still, a dull light was burning in the ladies' cabin, and the ladies were all gone save one, who, with the recent despair of sea-sickness still written on her face, was putting on her bonnet before the looking-glass.

"Please, ma'am, are we in?" asked Johnny.

"Oh, yes, we are in," answered the lady, despondently; "but I am always ill for three days after being in, so it don't matter."

Johnny did not know how to construe this gloomy speech; he ventured, however, on another question.

"And do you know, ma'am, if any one has come for me? I am to be called for."

"My dear," answered the lady, "my poor head aches so that I can't say a word. It's distraction to look at myself and tie my bonnet-strings; and I wish, I do, that Adam and Eve were at the bottom of the sea. It stands to reason that if it were not for them and original sin there would be no such thing as sea-sickness."

It was plain that this lady was in no frame of mind to give Johnny the desired information, even if she possessed it, which he doubted. He began to feel nervous. Suppose the man had come for him, and, not finding him, had gone away without him! Johnny's heart sank with fear at the thought, and he crept up-stairs as fast as he could. The night was cold, and the child shivered as he reached the deck, and stood there looking about him. A few faint stars shone in a black sky, and a great many lights twinkled in the town and harbor. There was also, and Johnny was aware of it, a sound of foreign speech as unlike Johnny's French as if it had been Hindostanee; but the anxious boy only thought of the man who was to come and fetch him, and seeing a dark form by the gangway, he went up to it and whispered timidly:

"Please, sir, are you the man who is to come and fetch me? I am Mrs. Dorrien's little boy."

The dark form turned round, and Mr. Blackmore's voice answered:

"What, haven't they come for the little parcel yet? Never mind, they will be sure to come, unless they forget it."

And with this piece of comfort, Mr. Blackmore walked away. He was not an unkind man, but he had just discovered that part of his luggage had remained behind, and the discovery had tried his temper. Johnny stood where he had left him. He felt cold and dismayed. Suppose the man should forget to call for him!

"Well, then," thought Johnny, rallying, and trying to feel stout and brave, "I'll walk to Saint-Ives. I can speak French, and ask my way, and—"

"Confound that boy," said a gruff voice, "where can he have gone to?"

"Please, sir," said Johnny, softly, "is it me you want?"

"There he is," exclaimed the man, without answering the question. "You have got his traps, have you?"

Another man's voice answered something in French which Johnny could not understand; then that second speaker came and took his hand. The boy looked up at him; he saw that this man had rather a coarse red face, and that, though decently clad, he was not a gentleman.

"*Par ici*," he said, in French. Johnny followed in mute obedience. He felt very like a parcel, after all.

CHAPTER III.

THE dark city, the spectral-looking port, the flickering gas-lights on the long, lonely quays, remained forever after like a dream in Johnny's memory, too vivid not to have had some sort of existence, too unreal to be true. But reality returned with an omnibus, into which he was hoisted, and where he found himself alone, the man having gone outside

to smoke. Johnny crept to the farthest corner, and ensconced himself there. Ah! if his mother could have seen her boy in his little gray suit, with his small, useless hands, that could do so little for him yet in the hard battle of life, thrust into his pockets, and his tired, anxious face vainly peering out of the window into the darkness of the night, and the strangeness of an unknown land! If she could have seen him, surely her heart would have ached for his loneliness.

All that Johnny could see at first of the country through which they were driving was that it was very desolate-looking. Then, when a chill breeze came from the sea, and the moon rose and shone in a stormy sky, he saw with awe the darkness of thick clouds hanging over the low, flat land. Once a tall windmill rose black and gaunt above the plain, with its sails spread to the wind; low down near it a glow-worm-light glimmered in the window of a little cottage. A narrow stream glided silently in the darkness, with here and there a streak of silver upon it, and a flock of sheep, unheeding night, or the coming storm of the threatening clouds, were grazing quietly close by; but the picture was gone almost as soon as seen, and a long stretch of wood, with gaunt trees and scarce houses, followed in dreary monotony.

At length, and when Johnny thought that the omnibus would never stop, it stood suddenly still; the door opened, and the man looked in.

"Hi!" he said, nodding.

The boy alighted, the man took his hand again, the omnibus drove away with great jingling of bells, and the two walked on together in the darkness of a lonely lane, till they came to a wide iron gate, with tall trees nodding above the wall. The earth, still sodden with recent rains, was also strewed with fallen leaves; the air felt damp and chill, and Johnny shivered, yet he was not cold. His heart beat, his pulses throbbed, his blood was on fire with excitement, fear, and hope. It was as in one of the old stories which the boy loved so well. The little knight stood at the castle-gate, and knew not what awaited him within—defeat or victory, glory or shame. A bell rang with a great clangor, then a light flashed through the iron bars, and a fresh-colored woman opened a little door in the great

gate. Scarcely had the two entered when a tall, thin, dark man appeared.

"Are you John Dorrien?" he asked, stooping a little to see the child, and speaking in English.

Johnny answered that he was; then suddenly he added, looking up in the somewhat saturnine face of the speaker:

"Please, sir, are you Mr. Ryan?"

"And how do you know my name?" asked Mr. Ryan, taken by surprise.

"I traveled with Oliver Blackmore, and he told me to give you his best regards," answered Johnny, with a touch of consequence.

"Did he, the dear boy!" cried Mr. Ryan, whose dark face at once beamed like sunshine. "And how did he look?"

"He looked very well; but, please, sir, is that woman Madame Blanc?—because, if she is, Oliver Blackmore told me that he kissed her on both cheeks."

Mr. Ryan turned to Madame Blanc, and translated John Dorrien's message. She received it with voluble delight, but all Johnny understood of her discourse was the word "*ange*," several times repeated.

"And now, come with me, my lad," said Mr. Ryan, addressing Johnny. "This way—don't fall."

The admonition came too late. Johnny had stumbled and fallen over the first step of a *perron* that led to a large house. It was almost invisible; the trees that grew round it were high, and darkness had come back to the sky. The moon had left it once more for her palace of huge black clouds, and would not return and shine upon earth again.

"Not hurt, eh?" said Mr. Ryan, picking up Johnny. "Never mind; you are no Roman, and will not think it ill-luck, will you? Besides, you will have many a stumble before you leave us, will you not, my lad?"

"I hope not," replied Johnny, quickly.

"What, you don't mean to stumble, do you?"

"No, sir," answered the boy, stoutly, "I don't mean it."

Mr. Ryan whistled, then laughed, a low, amused, chuckling laugh.

"Not if I can help it," added Johnny, fearing he had

been presumptuous, and looking up at his companion's swarthy face; but Mr. Ryan only laughed again.

They stood in a wide stone hall, cold and gloomy, a staircase before them, a tall door on their right hand. At this door Mr. Ryan gave a low premonitory knock, then opened it, and gently pushed Johnny into a large and lofty room. How it was furnished, whether its aspect was dreary or pleasant, Johnny knew not. His eyes were riveted on a bald man in a black cassock, who sat reading at a desk at the farther end of the apartment, with the light of a little lamp shining on his pale, austere face. No soul waiting for judgment ever looked at Rhadamanthus with more awe than Johnny now looked at the Abbé Véran, the head of the great school of Saint-Ives.

The abbé slowly raised his eyes from his book, and, without giving Mr. Ryan a glance, he fastened them at once on the boy—at least, Johnny felt as if those eyes, which had nothing remarkable in them save the intensity of their gaze, pinned him in some sort. He was not frightened, and they were not, indeed, unkind eyes, but he felt a strange fascination which compelled him to meet that long, fixed look. The abbé said something in French.

"Sit down, my lad," said Mr. Ryan, who threw himself, with a look of perfect unconcern, on a leather chair, and, thrusting his hands in his pockets, assumed the cool attitude of a spectator; at least, so thought Johnny, when, climbing up on what seemed the highest chair on which he had ever sat, he girt himself, so to speak, for the coming encounter. The abbé leaned a little forward, and almost smiled as he looked at the boy before him. He was such a little fellow, and his little pale face, with his large eyes and sharp chin, looked so eager and resolute. Mr. Ryan, too, who was leaning back in his chair, with his head a little bent forward, also looked at Johnny curiously, like one who had not seen him before, and who found that childish face worth the reading. Meanwhile, Johnny was going mentally through his Latin grammar, from the *Rosa* down to the *imum mare* of old L'Homond.

But there was no need of such preparations. That sea was not to be sounded on this evening. The abbé intended nothing so formidable for this first interview, at least. He opened his desk, took out from it a paper folded like a let-

ter, gave it to Mr. Ryan, who handed it to Johnny, saying—

"Do you know this?"

Johnny became crimson, and his gray eyes sparkled like diamonds as he replied, excitedly:

"I wrote it. It is a letter to mamma on her birthday. I wrote it in Latin—I did."

"You did?" repeated Mr. Ryan, in amused mimicry. "Well, then, we don't know Latin, so just translate it for us into French—into English, I mean, and I shall put it into French for the abbé."

"But I could put it into French myself—I could," said ambitious Johnny. "I know French, I do."

"Oh! you do?" repeated Mr. Ryan. "What sort of French, I wonder? Never mind, fire away."

And so Johnny, with the two men looking at him, with his heart beating, and his temples throbbing, with his whole being undergoing the strain of a young race-horse who pants to reach the goal—so Johnny, we say, translated into French the Latin letter which he had concocted alone for his mother's eyes, and which she had sent as his best credentials to the abbé. Once or twice the priest's grave face relaxed at Johnny's French; but the translation was a correct one, and proved what he wanted to know—that Johnny had really and truly written that letter. The composition would have been child's play to a boy regularly trained, but it spoke well for the abilities of one who had had no better teaching than poor Mrs. Dorrien's. Mr. Ryan looked at the abbé and nodded, and the abbé nodded in return, and said a few words.

"There, we may go now," said Mr. Ryan to Johnny.

The boy rose with a perplexed look.

"Is that all?" he asked.

"To be sure it is—what more do you want?"

Johnny gave a wistful look at the silent abbé, whose eyes followed him out, as they had greeted him in, and walked after Mr. Ryan. He felt disappointed. He had expected a trying examination, and after it triumph and praise; whereas the examination had been a joke, and praise seemed to be as much out of the question as triumph.

"What did he say? I mean the abbé?" he could not help asking of his companion as the door closed upon them.

"Say! Why, you do not suppose that the abbé had any thing to say about you?"

Johnny had supposed it, and was crestfallen at being mistaken.

"I'll tell you what, boy," resumed Mr. Ryan, "if your bump of love of approbation is a large one, it will starve here, so far as Monsieur l'Abbé goes. He *never* praises. What he did say was that you were to have some supper, and to go to bed directly."

He took Johnny to the refectory, a lofty, bare room, where he ate alone, Mr. Ryan, however, looking on with evident interest. He sat back on a form, his long legs stretched out, his dark head leaning against the blank-looking wall, and his hands thrust deep in his pockets, with what Johnny could not help thinking a very rakish air.

"That's your supper," said he, "bread, cold meat, an apple, and plenty of *abondance*. *Abondance*, if you don't know it, is a little wine and a great deal of water. No stint of it, such as it is; nor of bread either; meat, limited supply."

"Please, sir," remarked Johnny, fastening his brilliant gray eyes on the English teacher's dark face, "shall I soon begin Greek?"

"And what do you want with Greek?" asked Mr. Ryan, with a stare.

"I want to read Homer," replied ambitious Johnny.

"And what have you got to do with Homer, *I* should like to know?"

"My father read Homer," said Johnny, a little proudly.

"My father made shoes, and I wish he had not set me to Greek and Latin," replied Mr. Ryan, dryly; "a little learning and no cash don't go far nowadays."

He gave his feet a philosophic stare, and Johnny, looking at them shyly, was afraid that they were not very well shod.

"He's like cousin Mary," thought Mr. Ryan, looking at the boy; "he has got her eyes." And he half-sighed, for those gray eyes, so sweet, so dark, so deep and brilliant once, those eyes which Mr. Ryan had liked so well in the by-gone days of his Irish home, though they often tormented him sadly, had long been closed in the calm sleep of death, and could vex and bless him no more.

"Homer!—you want to read Homer!" he resumed. Then, with a sudden twinkle in his eye, "I suppose you write verses?"

Johnny blushed dreadfully. Even his mother had not fathomed that awful secret.

"Come, let us hear them," said Mr. Ryan with cool authority. His father had made shoes, and every boy in the school knew it, but not one of those boys had ever dared to fail him in respect or to dispute his slightest wish. It did not now occur to Johnny to resist Mr. Ryan's behest. In great trepidation he began:

"The lady waited at the gate—"

"Why so?" inquired Mr. Ryan; "could not she get in?"

Johnny, though rather disturbed, continued:

"The stars were shining in the sky."

"And where in the name of common-sense would you have them shine?" asked Mr. Ryan, with a stare.

The susceptibility of the poetic temperament revolted at the heartless question. This first sample criticism was too much for Johnny's equanimity. He did not cry, because he would not, but the little mobile mouth quivered, and the gray eyes deepened in the intensity of their gaze. In vain Mr. Ryan said, "Go on." Not another word could Johnny utter. "Ah! I suppose I have stopped you," remarked Mr. Ryan, coolly. "Never mind, my boy. You'll read Homer yet; and, what's more, there's a look of John Milton about that head of yours, with the wavy hair and broad white forehead and gray eyes."

"My name is John Dorrien," said Johnny, his light spirits rising at once.

"That's right; now finish your *abondance* and go to bed."

In the dormitory Johnny was surrendered to the care of the man who had fetched him from the steamer. He gazed shyly around him. He only saw little iron bedsteads, and here and there sleepy eyes looking at him winkingly. Near his own bed he found his luggage, concerning which he had had many uneasy thoughts since he had left the steamer. As well as he might he undressed

himself alone, with his little awkward unaccustomed hands, said his prayers, then crept into his cot. He long lay there awake, listening to the snoring of the boy next him, and looking at the lamp which burned dimly nigh the great black cross at the end of the long, narrow room.

"You will have your crosses to bear," had said his mother to Johnny, on the last evening they had spent together; "remember that your Lord bore his."

Johnny remembered it now as he looked at that black cross. He had been reared religiously, and the wonderful story of Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Galilee, was very dear to him. He had trembled with awe at the miracles; he had sobbed with sorrow over the agony; and he had loved, with all his childish heart, that Son of Man who loved man so well that He had become a little child for his sake. He thought of Him now, his Father, his God, his Friend, and he made brave resolves that, with his help, he would be very good, and work very hard at Saint-Ives. Johnny thought of his mother, too, and of the sea, which seemed bigger in his recollection than it had seemed in reality; of Oliver Blackmore, who was so beautiful in black velvet; of that dark-eyed Mr. Ryan, who thought him like John Milton; of the abbé, who never praised one—then suddenly he was fast asleep. But poor Mrs. Dorrien did not sleep that night. For, alas! she knew, what Johnny only suspected, that days must lengthen into weeks, and weeks into months and years, before she could see her boy's face again.

CHAPTER IV.

The August sky stooped over the hot landscape. The trees looked heavy with sleep; the birds were hushed; there was no breath of air, no low murmur of flowing water throughout the silent land; the very cows that stood in the pasture forgot to graze, and stared straight before them with large, drowsy eyes.

Nowhere did the sultry day brood more heavily than over Saint-Ives. These were the holidays, and the old

house was deserted. The pupils had flown. The professors were gone or going. The tall trees which grew round the building cast their broad shadow over the empty playground. The sun looked in at the windows of the schoolroom, and poured a broad flood of light over the vacant forms and ink-stained desks. A spell seemed laid upon the place, and silence, dust, and cobwebs, were to reign supreme for weeks to come.

"John," said Mr. Ryan, as they walked side by side in the lime-tree alley, which divided the play-ground of the pupils from the little grass-grown garden of the Abbé Véran—"John, how many years is it since you came to us?"

"Seven years next October, Mr. Ryan," answered John; "but can it really be seven years?"

He stood still to reckon. If he could have looked at himself, as he stood in the summer light, John would not have wondered that seven years had come and gone since he first entered the walls of Saint-Ives. Mrs. Dorrien's little boy was now a tall, well-built young man of seventeen, who looked twenty. His brown hair still curled around his clear white forehead, and his deep gray eyes still had their old beauty. They were large, brilliant, and thoughtful. He could have been described by them, and recognized by the description, but Mrs. Dorrien herself would scarcely have known her boy's little pale face in that intellectual countenance of mingled brightness and refinement; for, though the youth was not handsomer than had been the child, his mobile features being too irregular for beauty, the sharp quaintness was gone from them, and a passionate, ardent meaning had come in its stead.

"Yes, it is really seven years," said John Dorrien, looking at Mr. Ryan, whose hair had turned iron-gray, and who was also sallower and thinner than of yore. "Would you have thought it was so long, Mr. Ryan?"

Mr. Ryan, who had been to Ireland in the year of John Dorrien's coming, who had not been there since, and who was going there now—being, indeed, ready dressed for the journey—sighed, and shook his heavy gray locks at the lad.

"Why, you boy," he said, "I thought it was ten years. I thought it was ages. But never mind that; let's sit down. And now let me hear these verses of yours again. 'Red glows the east,' you know."

He threw himself on a stone bench, folded his arms, rested his head against the trunk of a lime-tree, and closed his eyes; while John, sitting by him, began in a clear voice, which had kept up all its early music:

"'Red glows the East, as though some smouldering fire
Behind the darkness of those hills had burned
Since eve. From earth's broad hearth to highest sky
Springs up the kindling flame; the mountains all
Have caught the signal. Fast from peak to peak
And land to land it flies, and tidings tells
Of joyous vict'ry won o'er dismal night.'"

Here John paused, and Mr. Ryan opened his eyes with an interrogative "Well?"

"I forget what comes next."

"You don't forget Miriam's address to the sun, I am sure," said Mr. Ryan. "Let us have it."

Nothing loath, John resumed:

"'Swift traveler o'er many a land:
Oh! might I but depart with thee at dawn;
At eve return, then o'er yon western ridge
Watch thee go down, on some fresh journey bent,
Ardent as in thy morn. For breathing-time
Thou askest not, unwearied journeyer;
Light, hours, and clime, dispensing in thy path.
Thus in the East, that knew thee not till then,
Didst thou dawn o'er the new-created earth,
Still sleeping green and silent in the shade,
Or yellow, like some glittering coin of gold,
First stamped with image of a mighty king—
From gloomy depths of chaos didst thou rise,
Filling void space with ever-spreading light.'"

John paused, and Mr. Ryan, giving his heavy head of hair a shake, said, in a low, emphatic voice:

"John, I told you when you came that you had a look of John Milton about the forehead; well, then, there is nothing finer in John Milton than in what John Dorrien has just repeated to me."

From which sweeping assertion, which brought a modest blush to the lad's cheek, it will be seen that Mr. Ryan was no longer a critic, but a devotee. His worship, indeed, was uncompromising. He was thirty-seven, and believed every word he said—no wonder that John, who was seventeen, believed every word of it, too. He had within him that strong consciousness of talent which is so great a de-

luder of youth, for, until experience and judgment have come to the rescue, how is a lad, with great intellectual gifts, to know that he is not a genius?

"'Miriam the Jewess' will be a fine thing—a grand thing! And when you are a great man, my boy, and the world worships you, you will remember that William Ryan first discovered that you were a genius, and first foretold your fame."

John Dorrien laughed, but his eyes sparkled with more than laughter.

"That scene between Miriam and the chamois-hunter," resumed Mr. Ryan, "is simply magnificent. The young nun is lovely, and the hermit is fine—fine, sir. And now I must be gone—really gone," said Mr. Ryan, starting up and looking at his watch; "and Oliver Blackmore has not come, after all."

His face fell as he said it, and John looked awkward.

"Something must have prevented him from coming," said Mr. Ryan, meditatively; "but perhaps he is at the station," he added, brightening up at the thought. "Let us be off, John."

Saint-Ives was now connected by a railway with Dieppe and Paris, and to the station, which was only a mile off, Mr. Ryan and John Dorrien walked under the hot August sun, John carrying Mr. Ryan's carpet-bag, and Mr. Ryan expatiating on the delight and honor of having his carpet-bag carried by a poet. He also kept looking out for Oliver Blackmore, feeling sure the dear boy would not break his appointment. But neither on the road nor at the station was the dear boy to be seen, and Mr. Ryan's face fell, and disappointment was written in his whole aspect, as it became almost certain that the train would come in before Oliver appeared.

"I hope nothing unpleasant has kept him back," he said, musingly.

"I hope not," answered John. "I hear the signal, Mr. Ryan."

"John!"

"Yes, Mr. Ryan."

"I think you must touch up the Hermit a bit. He has been an old soldier, you know. Well, the two characters—"

"Here's the train," said John.

The black mass was coming up, puffing and steaming; it slackened its speed; it stopped. The two or three passengers who were waiting under the shed, where Mr. Ryan and John were talking, hurried forward, lest there should be no room for them in the long line of carriages; but Mr. Ryan lingered, and, laying his hand on John Dorrien's shoulder, he looked long and earnestly in the youth's face.

"God bless your handsome eyes!" said he.

John laughed, much amused.

"Why, Mr. Ryan," said he, "what can there be in my eyes that you are always praising them?"

"Good-by," was Mr. Ryan's only answer. He had never told John why he liked those gray eyes of his, and he never would tell him. They were his poem, the poem of his youth and of his first love—a poem fairer and more pathetic than John's "Miriam the Jewess," though Mr. Ryan himself did not know it. He caught up his carpet-bag, and jumped into the first railway-carriage. Scarcely was he in when the train began to move. At once he thrust his head out of the window, and, nodding to John, who stood looking on, he said, emphatically:

"Remember about the Hermit."

John smiled brightly. The train moved on, slowly at first, then with a quicker pace. Swiftly it went by, then vanished in the sunlit landscape, speeding on to Paris; for, before revisiting green Erin, Mr. Ryan meant to have a look at Lutetia.

John was spending his holidays at Mr. Blackmore's, and toward that gentleman's abode, fully nine miles off, he now walked bravely in the hot August sun. There was not a cloud in the summer sky. The sea shone far away like a sheet of glass, the very air felt burning; and, though John tried to think of the Hermit, the only conclusion he came to concerning that venerable person was that he lived in a cool mountain-cell, and that he, John, wished he were with him. Suddenly he remembered that, by taking a path to his left, he should lengthen his road a mile or so, but that he should also get the most delightful shade. He cut across a field of yellow stubble, climbed a bank, went down another, and in a few minutes he had entered a long, winding lane, cool, green, and gloomy as a forest avenue. The ferns that grew on either side looked fresh and dewy

as in the morning; the dark ivy that clung to the banks and twined round the trunks of the tall trees, whose boughs met overhead, had not a stain of dust on its glossy leaves. Scarcely a stray sunbeam, scarcely a glimpse of blue sky, broke on the green freshness of this path, which seemed to wind forever away through the sunburned landscape.

John walked on with renewed vigor, and, as he walked, some pleasant fancies went with him. He thought of the hermit, of Mr. Ryan's predictions, concerning the truth of which no reasonable person could feel a doubt, and of his mother's pride and joy when that grand secret should be revealed to her. He had not seen her for seven years, he did not know when he should see her again; but she was always in his thoughts, and he now smiled triumphantly to himself as he conjured up her bright, glad face.

The lane which John was following led him to another, and this to another again; and so from green lane to green lane he went on, till he came to the little river that flowed, but somewhat farther on, through the grounds lying around Mr. Blackmore's château. Here John paused, took a delicious draught of pure, clear water, threw himself on the grassy earth, and enjoyed the beauty of the spot. On one side rose a low slope, with young trees scattered here and there upon it, on the other a verdant wilderness of tangled brushwood; between these two the clear brook, dark and cool, flowed on windingly in mingled shade and sunshine, through brown old stones and drooping weeds, to a light background of shivering aspen-trees. Lying on his back, with the blue sky looking down at him through the heavy boughs, John felt wonderfully cool, refreshed, and happy. His day-dreams, indeed, were of the most delightful nature. What he would be, what he would accomplish, what he would do, suffer, if need be, and go through to gain his ends, he dreamed of then. He was imaginative, and Imagination sends forth many a ship on that fair sea where Fancy sits at the helm and Hope spreads the sails. Knowledge, with Wisdom on her brow, sat in one boat; Ambition, in purple attire, steered another; and rosy Love, but rather far away, was in a third. There would soon have been a whole squadron of them, if two angry birds, perched in a tree hard by, had not begun a loud chattering quarrel, which acted like a squall, and dispersed the fairy fleet.

Shy Fancy fled at the sound, and John, who was now thoroughly rested, rose and walked on.

He soon forsook the little river, and turned into a path, where a thatched cottage here and there peeped out of the trees and bushes. A flight of steps cut out in a steep bank led up to a dwelling larger than the rest, but also thatched and low-roofed, and half hidden in verdure. At the foot of these steps John Dorrien suddenly paused and said:

"Are you coming down?"

"No; come up to me," was the answer.

John bounded up with the agility of seventeen, and soon stood on the highest step but one.

"So that is how you kept your promise to Mr. Ryan," he said, looking up at Oliver Blackmore, who leaned over the low gate, looking down at him with innocence on his face — the same handsome face which had caught little Johnny's heart and ruled his childish fancy seven years before.

"My dear boy," languidly said Oliver, ignoring John Dorrien's remark, "how can you have seen me? I saw you, but I was looking down—decidedly you must have eyes—a supplementary pair—in the top of your head."

"Why did you say you would come?" persisted John.

"I knew it would please the old fellow," said Oliver, amiably; "but of course I never intended it."

"He expected you to the last," said John.

"Of course he did. August, noon, nine miles, and he expected me! I declare that man's freshness is delightful; but, you see, Monsieur Latour is quite as delightful in his way, and far more accessible. Come in, he is in high feather to-day."

He opened the gate, and John entered a little grassy orchard, which extended in front of the low house. As they walked through it, Oliver said, with a shrewd look in his laughing black eyes:

"You would never guess Monsieur Latour's last! My dear boy, he is reading 'Telemachus' for the first time—he is sixty, if he is a day, and he is reading 'Telemachus' for the first time!"

He said no more, for they had reached the end of the little inclosure, and Monsieur Latour sat there before an easel, painting a lovely glimpse of the valley below, with

its gliding river and picturesque peasant-homes. He was a little man, with a large head, white hair, and a rosy face, simple as that of a child. That face beamed again with pleasure and welcome as its owner turned round and saw the new-comer.

"My dear Monsieur Dorrien," he cried, airily, "I was hoping for you. Monsieur Blackmore went to see if you were coming, and I am delighted to find that he caught you as you were speeding past, and lured you up to my hermitage. You have not been near me for ever so long, and the picture has progressed since you saw it last. Come, now—your candid opinion, if you please."

John Dorrien liked Monsieur Latour, but he did not like Monsieur Latour's pictures, which were daubs; and, as he did not wish to give him pain, and could not conscientiously give him pleasure, he shunned his hermitage as a rule. He now regretted having yielded to the temptation of coming up. A blush spread over his sensitive face, and it was rather nervously that he said:

"Do you not remember, Monsieur Latour, that I know nothing of painting?"

"I like the impressions of untutored minds," promptly said Monsieur Latour. "Little Jeanne came up the other day, and she saw at once that this was a cow," added Monsieur Latour, pointing to a brown patch on the foreground of his picture, which did credit to Jeanne's penetration. "I felt flattered, I can assure you, at that child's testimony to my humble abilities. Come, now, Monsieur Dorrien, what do you think of it? That little bit on the hill-side is not amiss, is it? One feels the air moving through those trees—shut your eye, and look at it so. There! That foreground, too, I like. I walked a league to get that bit of foreground. I am glad you like it," continued Monsieur Latour, warming with his subject, and convinced that John had been praising him all that time. "You may believe me, Monsieur Dorrien, but when I was a tailor in Paris, cutting out and fitting on coats, I knew I had missed my vocation, and that I should have been a painter. Yes, Monsieur Dorrien, I knew it all along."

"Ah! but tell him what the subject of your next picture is to be," urged Oliver, with a look full of mischief.

Monsieur Latour once more suspended his labors, and turned round on John.

"Have you read 'Telemachus?' he gravely asked. Then, without waiting for an answer—"Monsieur Dorrien, I had heard of 'Telemachus'—who has not?—but I had never read that wonderful book till chance placed it in my hands the other day. Imagine my feelings! Why, Monsieur Dorrien, 'Telemachus' is the grandest, the finest book that ever was written!"

"And Monsieur Latour's next picture is to show us Calypso on the sea-shore," said Oliver, gravely; "conceive that, if you can, John."

Monsieur Latour laughed, and seemed in high glee.

"A fine subject, Monsieur Dorrien," he said, with a beaming face—"a noble subject. Imagine Calypso, with streaming hair and outstretched arms, the ship of Telemachus speeding away; or the grotto—think of the grotto!"

"Do, John," entreated Oliver, pathetically. "Think of the grotto—think of Calypso, as painted by Monsieur Latour!"

But John could not enjoy this. He felt angry and ashamed to see Monsieur Latour laughed at to his face. He wanted to be gone, and, spite the entreaties of Monsieur Latour, begging him to prolong his visit, he persisted in going; and Oliver, with a pathetic "He will not let me stay with you and enjoy myself, Monsieur Latour," followed his friend.

"Two nice young fellows," soliloquized Monsieur Latour, as he resumed his labors, and put a dab of bright green on a tree; "but Monsieur Dorrien is by no means so amiable as his friend."

"John," said Oliver, as they went down the steps, "is it that you have no sense of humor, or is it that you are troubled with fears of the next world, and so could not enjoy Monsieur Latour?"

John was silent.

"It must be the next world," resumed Oliver, as they walked side by side. "Strange that you should let it worry you so! To me this world—a hot one to-day—is both delightful and sufficient; and I wonder, I do, at those who make themselves wretched in the here below, which is so certain, to be blessed in the hereafter, which is so

doubtful. Don't tell me that, if it had not been for the next world, you would have learned Greek! It is not in human nature to go through such torture without hopes of a heavenly reward. From that misery my happy skepticism saved me. I could be lazy without one pang of remorse, or one fear of the ten commandments. Mr. Blackmore wanted to coax me into it; but, though I like him—"

"Yes; if you like any one, you like Mr. Blackmore," said John, quietly.

"As you remark, with your delightful candor, if I like any one, I like Mr. Blackmore. He is such a handsome old boy! Well, then, I could not learn Greek to please him. And you know I am not a fool, John."

"Decidedly not."

"No; I am even clever in my way; but I am lazy, I confess it; and laziness and the horror of the thing combined were too much for my wish to please my father."

"How, then, did you get on with Mr. Granby?"

"Delightfully. We smoked and drank brandy-and-water together by the hour. He was a little soft about Hegel, and wanted to explain to me how all within ourselves, and without ourselves, too, is in the idea, as he kindly expressed it; but if it be true that, dying, Hegel declared of his disciples that only one man had understood him, and that, concerning that man, he had strong doubts —'*Et encore m'a-t-il compris*,' says the legend—why, I think that Mr. Granby must have been that intelligent person. However, he left Hegel for Comte, I believe."

John Dorrien was not yet a philosopher. He had not yet forsaken the flowery paths of poetry and eloquence, and knew nothing of Hegel and Comte, unless through hearsay.

"And what are you, Oliver?" he asked, standing still to put the question—"a Hegelian or a Positivist?"

Oliver laughed gayly.

"My dear John Dorrien," he said, "let us shake hands; your innocence does me good. Hegel is charming, but foggy; Comte is delightfully clear, but decidedly crazy; so I am Oliver Blackmore, future owner of a handsome property; young, healthy, and wise. I do no one any harm, that I am aware of; my enemies, if I have any, confess I am an amiable young man, though a lazy one—what more can the world or my friends want from me?"

John Dorrien walked on silently. He felt, though he did not care to analyze it, the difference which there was between his own earnest, passionate, ambitious nature and that of Oliver Blackmore—so easy, so careless, so amiable, and so candidly self-indulgent.

Every one liked Oliver, and John could not escape the universal lot. He liked his friend. He had also a keen sense of old kindness, for Oliver had redeemed his boyish promises, and Mr. Blackmore had been hospitable for many years; but for all that, John knew in his heart that there was more real sympathy between him and Mr. Ryan, whose hair was iron-gray, than between him and Oliver, whose locks were black as the raven's wing. And yet Oliver's boast of being an amiable fellow was not a vain one. He liked being liked, much as a cat likes being stroked. He could not do without pleasing, and he laid himself out to please, with every one of the charming gifts which he had received from bountiful Nature. His face was beautiful, his person was graceful, his voice was soft, his manners were easy and winning. He was very clever, and not quite so lazy as he chose to say. Study he objected to, as he objected to every thing requiring hard work; but he liked reading, he had plenty of abilities, he was quick, clear-headed, and he had an excellent memory. He had done more than smoke and drink brandy-and-water with his tutor, Mr. Granby. He had read prodigiously under the guidance of that gentleman. He was familiar with ancient and modern literature; and though he read the classics through the medium of translations, what did it matter, since he had no wish to quote? He was also familiar, thanks to Mr. Granby, with all the modern views and discoveries of science, and with every modern substitute for Christianity as well. He was indeed solid or learned or well-grounded in nothing, not even in English, though he had plenty of that fluency which is now so common a gift in society; but he passed for a very brilliant young man with the few people who knew him, and with all, save good judges of real merit, who are rare; he would have eclipsed John Dorrien, so silent, so reserved, and also so careless of shining, though endowed with a soaring ambition, that would have left far behind the few flights in which Oliver had ever indulged. There was, however, no rivalry

between these two, and no prospect of any. Oliver was to be rich, he knew it, and relied upon the world's estimate of Mammon with a very correct judgment for one so young. John Dorrien was his superior, granted; but what mattered it? So long as John was poor, what would the world care for John Dorrien's Greek and Latin? Besides, their paths were to be too wide apart for Envy ever to step between them, with her hateful apple of discord. John was to return to England and fight his battle there; and for reasons which he never mentioned or alluded to, England was to be eschewed by Oliver Blackmore. "England is too foggy," he would remark, in his languid fashion; "too hazy, I ought to say. I require clearer skies, a lighter air, a warmer sun than she can give me; so I think I shall pitch my tent in this old red château of Mr. Blackmore's. I dare say England will not miss me."

That red house, with its high roof and many windows, and a rich background of trees, now rose before the two friends, and looked a pleasant abode enough in the summer light, and yet Oliver Blackmore did not care to enter it.

"Let us stay out a while," said he, sinking down on the rich sward—they were in the grounds now—"and enjoy that little whiff of a breeze which is coming from the sea. There is no standing the house in this hot weather; and Mr. Blackmore will conclude that we are still seeing Mr. Ryan off. You can say any thing you please, I feel in the mood to listen; or if you cannot indulge in original thought, the weather being too hot, repeat some Greek verses. *You* like it, I know, and I like to hear you. You have a good voice to begin with, and I shall understand a word here and there—it will be like looking at a landscape through one's half-shut eyes."

"And it will send you to sleep," said John Dorrien, a little dryly.

"Very likely it will," replied Oliver, candidly; "but why should you grudge me my innocent slumbers?"

John yielded. It was enjoyment to him to repeat that sonorous Greek verse, and he knew that after a fashion Oliver liked to hear him. The whole day he had been haunted by a well-known passage in Æschylus—the monologue of the weary man, who, standing on the roof of Clytemnestra's palace, looks out for the fiery signal that is

to tell the taking of Troy, and to deliver him from his long watch.

Oliver, as he had said, understood a word here and there, and smiled languidly as John Dorrien's voice ceased.

"I am afraid," he remarked, "that I do not care for Æschylus. He is too cold for me; besides, in this case I feel nothing for that Greek slave or sentinel, and, strange to say, I sympathize with Clytemnestra. Agamemnon had been away too long, fighting for another woman, too, and then he brought home Cassandra. I say Clytemnestra has been ill-used by opinion. She only put one inconvenient man out of her way. Would Agamemnon have stuck at such a trifle?"

"It is not merely the murder that condemns her," quickly said John—"it is the treason."

"My dear boy, I shall turn Hegelian, and prove to you that what you call treason is a mere product of your imagination. For if there be nothing real in this world save the idea—The dinner-bell, I protest! Oh! why will Mr. Blackmore be so barbarous as to dine at this hour?"

But there was no help for it. Mr. Blackmore was barbarous, and they must go in and dress. The old red house, which was called a château by courtesy, was a pleasant abode. The dining-room on the ground-floor was a low, broad room, a little gloomy, perhaps, but not uncheerful; and when the two young men entered it, and found Mr. Blackmore, handsome and jovial as ever, standing on the middle of the floor to greet them, with his hands in his pockets, and his good-humored face beaming, John thought what a delightful place that château was, and how his mother would like it.

"We are late, I am afraid," said Oliver, demurely, "but we have been seeing Mr. Ryan off."

"Pack of nonsense!" interrupted Mr. Blackmore—"you were hard by. I saw you sprawling on the grass, doing nothing, and—"

"Now, that is hard," said Oliver, looking injured. "Dorrien had been giving me Æschylus, and I was giving him Hegel in return."

"Now do let these confounded foggy and wild-brained German philosophers alone, will you?" said Mr. Blackmore, impatiently. "Hegel, Fichte, Kant, Comte—I am sick of

the whole lot. Stick to Locke, a cool, clear-headed Englishman, worth the whole bundle of them."

Oliver never argued with his father. He did not like the trouble, to begin with, and then it was so useless.

"Well, and what had Mr. Ryan to say?" resumed Mr. Blackmore, addressing John. "I hope he gave Oliver a lecture?"

"Oliver was not there," replied John, unmercifully.

Mr. Blackmore turned on his son, and, with a stare, asked where the devil he had been all day.

"I have been enjoying Monsieur Latour," replied Oliver, unabashed, "and he was delightful, till John came and spoiled him. You know that Monsieur Latour is the retired tailor who paints hideous pictures, and lives in the little cottage up the *cavée*. Well, while he was fashioning coats and other garments, he neglected literature, and so never read 'Telemachus.' Fancy that!—a man who has never read 'Telemachus,' and to whom that son of Ulysses, and Calypso, and Mentor, come with all the freshness of George Sand's last. His raptures are unbounded, and he will read the book to you, and point out the fine passages, and tell you how he means to paint Calypso on the sea-shore, and—"

Here the entrance of dinner interrupted Oliver's discourse, to which Mr. Blackmore had listened with obvious amusement; but Monsieur Latour was resumed during the meal, and gave ample entertainment to both father and son. Even after dinner, Mr. Blackmore seemed to think that a retired tailor, who solaced his old age by the painting of pictures, and who had never read "Telemachus," was a rare subject for a joke, and he laughed with a loud ha! ha! as he leaned back in his deep arm-chair, or stamped about the room with his hands in his pockets.

"Come, John, don't look so doleful about it," said he, giving John Dorrien's shoulder a hearty slap, "and don't be angry with that boy if he does laugh at poor Monsieur Latour. He has nothing better to do, you see. You have to work and to make your way, and his bread is all ready buttered for him, the worthless fellow! By-the-way," he added, without waiting for any answer, "are you connected with the Paris Dorriens?"

"I never heard about them before, sir."

"Ah! only namesakes. I thought so."

"What are these Dorriens?" asked Oliver.

"Very rich—" had begun Mr. Blackmore, but a visitor was announced, and John, who was shy after a fashion, quietly stole away and went out alone into the grounds.

The day was waning fast. The long red sunlight swept like fire across the greensward, and stole through the silent alleys, lighting up their dewy shade with richest gold and crimson. A peace, a rest after the hot day, had stolen over all things. The trees, half in burning light and half in deep gloom, cast their long shadows before them, as if hastening to cool their parched roots. The daisies in the grass had shut up their pink heads as tight as they could, and were already fast asleep; and everywhere the faint hum and low murmur of insects and little hidden creatures rose on the air like a welcome to the coming night. John sauntered on a while, then turned back. He took a path that led to the house, and walked along it. The old château, that was Oliver Blackmore's home, and was to be his inheritance, gleamed far away at the end of the alley. Its walls looked crimson in the burning light of the setting sun, its windows shone like gold or fire. It appeared a pleasant dwelling, warm and bright, with gay flower-beds around it, and beyond these the green shelter of fine old trees, rising in heavy masses against the clear French sky. John Dorrien looked at it without envy, but he thought of the rich Paris Dorriens, and he smiled. Who knew but that he, too, might be a rich man yet, with a home like this to take his little mother to? He had promised her that he would rub Aladdin's lamp for her—and why should he not? For, you see, John Dorrien was young and self-reliant. He had talent, he knew it, and he thought the world was all his own.

CHAPTER V.

"SEVEN years!" thought Mrs. Dorrien, as she sat down alone one evening in September, her pale face and bending figure looking very dim in the grayness of the English twilight; "well, it has been hard to bear, but what was it to what lies before me!"

Mrs. Dorrien might well say so. Her health was broken, her little means were gone, and she owed a hundred pounds, of which twenty were due to Mrs. Henry, her landlady; and Mrs. Henry, who was a widow, who had a family, and who let her first-floor furnished, was coming up this evening to settle accounts with Mrs. Dorrien; for Mrs. Henry wanted her money, and she could not wait, and she would not wait, either, etc., etc.

"Oh! what shall I do?" thought poor Mrs. Dorrien. "O Johnny, Johnny, you will never know what I have had to bear for your sake!"

Truly her lot had been a hard one for these seven years. The parting from her boy had been cruel—the suspense of not knowing whether he would be accepted or not, and, when he was so, the fear that he would not get on, had worn her to a shadow. When Time had reconciled her to his absence, and convinced her that Johnny was to be the most brilliant scholar of Saint-Ives, Mr. Perry died suddenly; with him died Mrs. Dorrien's most lucrative occupation, but not the debt which she had contracted to him, in order to pay for her boy's schooling. That debt crushed her; she sold all her valuables, she worked from morning till night, and still its baleful shadow was spread over her life, deepening more and more as the years went by.

And Johnny was so happy all this time! He was always at the head of his class, to begin with. Then he spent his holidays with Oliver; and Mr. Blackmore's château was quite equal to Windsor Castle, said Johnny; and the fishing and the boating and the sea-bathing!—why, there had never been any thing like it in his life! Then, when Mr. Blackmore and Oliver once went traveling, and Johnny had to remain at Saint-Ives during the vacation, Mr. Ryan took him in hand and taught him fencing, and Johnny seemed to think that it was almost better than the boating and the fishing; and if all this made Mrs. Dorrien very happy and very proud, it also made her very miserable and very jealous. O Johnny, Johnny, how could you be so happy without your mother? And who and what were that Mr. Blackmore, and that Mr. Ryan, too, that they should bask in the sunshine of your presence, while she was starving in the shade?

For, though Mrs. Dorrien wrote pretty letters to both

these gentlemen, thanking them for their kindness to her fatherless boy, she thought in her heart that the compliment was by no means on her side, and she wondered that they did not seem to understand what it was for her to let them have the society of a boy like her boy. But these thorns in her lot could have been borne, if it had not been for the debt; and even that could have been endured, but for a great, a terrible question, which a wiser and less ambitious woman would have put to herself from the first. What was Mrs. Dorrien to do with the brilliant scholar for whom she had made such stupendous sacrifices of health, money, and almost honesty, since she had contracted debts which she could not possibly pay? She had unfitted her boy for any trade or business by which money could be earned early, and she had no means of advancing him in any of the liberal professions for which she had fitted him.

No wonder that, as she sat alone on this September evening waiting for Mrs. Henry, Mrs. Dorrien could not look her future in the face. She was staring vacantly at the dull street, when a cab stopped at the door below. It was for the first-floor lodgers, of course. Who came to her? The early life of this poor lady had been severed from its later years by one of those calamities which alienate some natures from their kind. There was that in the past which she could not bear to speak of or to remember. She secured silence and oblivion by the only means in her power, total solitude. She knew no one, called upon no one, received visits from none; so when there now was a sound of voices on the stairs, and a man's step mingled with them, when a knock at her door followed, and the door opened, and a tall dark form appeared in the opening, and it was plain that cab, voices, step, and visitor, were all for her, she started to her feet in wild terror of the calamity which must now be crossing her threshold.

"All in the dark, little mother?" said a gay young voice.

The shock was too great. Mrs. Dorrien neither screamed nor fainted, but her head swam, and she would have fallen to the floor, if John had not caught her in his arms.

"O John," she gasped, "what is it—what has happened?

"Why, nothing, little mother, save that you do not seem to have got my letter."

"There is nothing—nothing wrong, Johnny?"

"Wrong!—no, indeed, little mother," he laughed gayly; "but do tell me how and where to get a light, that I may see you."

"Mary Ann!" called out the sharp voice of Mrs. Henry from the head of the stairs, "bring a light directly."

Mary Ann, who was coming up, appeared almost as soon as called, and, setting the candlestick on the table, stared with open mouth and eyes at the new-comer, till her mistress bade her go away, and shut the door. The girl obeyed, and Mrs. Henry remained, and stood looking on, unheeded by mother and son. And now they saw each other as Time had made them. With dismay John looked at a gray, care-worn woman; with mingled sorrow and pride Mrs. Dorrien lost forever that little Johnny from whom she had parted on the deck of the steamer, and found in his stead a tall, manly young fellow, with brown hair curling round his white forehead, and his handsome eyes sparkling beneath his dark eyebrows.

"Oh, my boy, my boy!" she cried, "how beautiful you have grown!"

This injudicious exclamation broke the spell which had kept Mrs. Henry silent till then. She had been thinking of giving Mrs. Dorrien one evening's respite, and her hand was on the lock of the door, when this cry of maternal pride exasperated her. What did Mrs. Dorrien mean, she should like to know, by keeping her sons like princes in French colleges, and have them come over for the holidays, and spending money on traveling, driving up to her, Mrs. Henry's, door in cabs, and then gloating over their beauty; while her boys had to go to the poorest day-school, and never had a day's pleasure from year's end to year's end, and she, Mrs. Henry, worked herself to the bone to keep them, and could not get her own hard-earned money from first floor furnished or second floor unfurnished. She would not stand it—that she would not. So, in her sharp, hard voice, she broke on Mrs. Dorrien's raptures by saying:

"If you please, Mrs. Dorrien, I should like to have that account settled—sorry to interrupt you, but it will not take

five minutes; and I was to come this evening, you know. I have got the receipt ready, stamp and all, and as *of course* you have the money ready, too, there will be no delay; and I can leave you the light, if you have none ready," added Mrs. Henry, trying to smile, and look gracious.

No smile came over Mrs. Dorrien's face—she looked from her boy, whom she was clasping in a yearning embrace, to her landlady, and her poor, sunken eyes took a pitiful, imploring look, and it was in a low, meek voice that she said: "I am so sorry, Mrs. Henry; but I have been ill all day, and—and I had forgotten—"

"Forgotten!" cried Mrs. Henry, in her shrillest tones —"forgotten that you owe me more than a year's rent, Mrs. Dorrien! Well, I have not forgotten it, nor has my landlord, who never lets me off a day; and I shall have to pay him next Michaelmas, Mrs. Dorrien; and I don't keep my boys in foreign colleges—*I* can't afford it; and they don't drive up to any one's door in cabs." Mrs. Henry was urged to this remark by the stern looks which John was casting on her as he heard his little mother addressed thus disrespectfully; "and I pay my way, ma'am, and can look any one in the face, ma'am."

"God help me!" said poor Mrs. Dorrien, sinking down on a chair, and looking up at John. "O my boy! my poor boy! what a welcome home!"

Mrs. Henry, who was exasperated by her troubles—and she had plenty of them—but who was not so hard-hearted as she was sharp-tongued, would have relented, on hearing this exclamation, if John had not interfered.

"Madam," said he, turning upon her with all the injured dignity of seventeen—"madam, how much does Mrs. Dorrien owe you?"

"Don't madam me, sir!" cried Mrs. Henry, in great wrath, "because I'll not stand it."

"I mean no impertinence," said John, still speaking loftily; "I only want to know how much Mrs. Dorrien owes you."

"Don't interfere, my dear," entreated his mother—"don't."

The request came too late.

"Twenty pounds sterling, five shillings, and sixpence," sharply answered Mrs. Henry; "if you have got the money, I have the receipt."

"I have not got the money," answered John, still looking stiff and offended; "but I shall have it—soon, I hope."

Mrs. Dorrien looked bewildered, and Mrs. Henry incredulous.

"When?" she asked, shortly.

John hesitated.

"In a fortnight, I believe," he answered, at length—"in a week, maybe," he added, noticing Mrs. Henry's lowering brow.

The landlady stared at him.

"And where will it come from?" she asked, point-blank.

"That," said John, dryly, "is my concern."

"Oh! very well," cried Mrs. Henry, snatching up the light and walking to the door, "that is your concern, on my word! Well, I know what my concern is, that is all."

And, giving the door a slam, she left mother and son in the dark.

"Where are the matches, little mother?" asked John, pretending to speak cheerfully.

Mrs. Dorrien did not answer. She rose, she looked for the matches, lit a candle with trembling fingers, then, turning her pale, scared face upon her son, she said, faintly: "O John, what is all this? Why have you come?—what have you been doing? You have exasperated Mrs. Henry. John, she will take every thing I have, every thing, and turn me out-of-doors to-morrow!"

"No, little mother," he soothingly replied, "she will not—it will be all right; but do let me look at you. O little mother, how you have fretted!"

"I could not help it, dear. My darling, how tall you are! And you have a beard, too."

"Not yet, little mother. Are you disappointed?"

She tried to laugh, but could not. She kept looking at him, seeking, in that clever young face, the sharp features of her little, pale Johnny, in that light and slender form, the little figure in gray, with its leather bag strapped round its waist, which she could never forget. The boy was gone, and, though manhood had not yet come, it was easy to see what manhood would be. But, even while she looked, bitter thoughts thrust themselves between Mrs. Dorrien and her boy's face. "O John," she said, again, "what is all this? Why have you come?"

"There is nothing wrong, little mother," he quickly answered, divining her thoughts. "I was at Mr. Blackmore's, as you know; well, his brother has died suddenly, and he and Oliver came over for the funeral; and they asked me to join them, and I could not resist the temptation of seeing you."

"And who paid for your expenses?"

"Oliver lent me the money."

Mrs. Dorrien stared at him in blank dismay.

John colored.

"There was no time to write and consult you," he said, quickly; "but it will be all right, little mother, on my word, it will. And now," he added, laughing, "can you let me have any thing to eat?"

The request suspended Mrs. Dorrien's questions. She became strong, energetic, and active, at once. In a few minutes John was eating eggs, drinking tea, and talking, all at once.

"Nothing new about Saint-Ives," he said, gayly; "always first, you know. I wrote to you how I got all the Greek prizes; but then we fellows at Saint-Ives have a name for Greek, you know. The abbé is a great man. He awed me terribly when I saw him first. I do not mind him a bit now. But he is strict—quite strict—we must be mediæval scholars, and grub over our studies. I wrote to you about Ludovic, that surly fellow, who hates me. I shall overtake him in philosophy next year; and, plodder though he is, I shall be sure to beat him, says Mr. Ryan. He is our great man now, but I have set my heart on being the first man of Saint-Ives. I must, and I will!" cried John Dorrien, with eyes sparkling at the thought of his triumph; "and I shall pass an examination for *bachelier des lettres*, and get such a diploma as no one ever had."

Mrs. Dorrien's eyes, too, lit at the thought of her boy securing the championship of Saint-Ives; but the flame soon died out of them as she remembered her troubles and Mrs. Henry. John's sensitive face quickly caught the meaning which he read on his mother's, and, pushing his plate away, he said, eagerly:

"Poor little mother! you are thinking of that horrid woman—don't mind her; and as to Saint-Ives, what matter if I don't go back to it? I can work alone now, and I see,

oh! I see," he added, looking dolefully around the bare room, "how dear my scholarship has cost you!"

"My dear, I do not grudge it," cried his mother, "if only I could keep you there longer, and if it were not for Mrs. Henry! Oh! my dear, why did you provoke her so?"

John stared.

"I only promised her her money," said he.

"But why did you, when it stands to reason that you cannot give it?"

John became very red.

"But if I said it I meant it!" he exclaimed, very warmly, "every word of it, little mother."

"But you can't give her the money," said Mrs. Dorrien, looking vexed; "you can't give her what you have not got."

"But I will get it," insisted John, speaking in a clear, positive voice; "I must and I will, only I should have explained it all to you first, as I would, too, if I had had time. Do you remember," asked John, moving his chair near his mother's, and taking her hand as he spoke—"do you remember how, on the day when you came home to tell me that I was going to Saint-Ives, I had been reading the story of Aladdin, and wishing for his lamp, so that I might rub and rub it for you?"

"My dear, I never forgot it," answered Mrs. Dorrien, smiling fondly in his face.

"Well, then, little mother, I have got a lamp, and I am going to rub it, and to pay Mrs. Henry, and get you back all the pretty things with which you have parted. Oh! if I could only get you back other things too—your pretty color and your bright eyes!" he did not add "your black hair," but his voice faltered as he looked at the gray locks which he remembered so glossy and so dark.

"Go on, Johnny," said his mother; "tell me all."

"No one knows any thing about it, save Mr. Ryan," said Johnny, blushing like a girl; "but the fact is, I have been writing a dramatic poem."

"A dramatic poem!" echoed Mrs. Dorrien, staring.

"Yes; a poem like Goethe's 'Faust,' or Byron's 'Manfred,' that's what I mean, little mother." John spoke very coolly, and as if the writing of dramatic poems were as

much a matter of course as the cutting of bread-and-butter. Mrs. Dorrien felt that some terrible misfortune was coming, but she did not realize it yet.

"My boy, John, you cannot be serious!" she faltered.

"Why not? I dare say you think me too young. Well, I cannot help being young. What does one's age signify? It is one's work that is the thing. Well, I have read all that is written of 'Miriam the Jewess' to Mr. Ryan, and he thinks highly of it. Shall I repeat some of it to you, little mother?"

Mrs. Dorrien said "Yes," with a bewildered look, which made her son laugh.

"Red glows the East, as though some smouldering fire!"

began John; then he broke off with "But I must tell you the subject first. You must know that Miriam the Jewess is a beautiful girl—all this happens in the middle ages—an orphan, and that she lives alone in a wild place in the Pyrenees. Men hate her because she is a Jewess, and fear her because they think she is a witch. The opening scene shows her alone, in a grand mountain solitude, watching the sun rise in the plain at her feet. And now I shall begin again."

John went through some hundred lines, then he paused and looked at his mother with that look which says so plainly, "What do you think of it?" Mrs. Dorrien gazed at her son with mingled pride, delight, and consternation.

"My dear boy," she said, clasping her hands, "is it possible that you actually wrote those beautiful verses?"

"Then you do think them good?" said Johnny, his face beaming with delight.

"My dear, they are grand!"

"That is just what Mr. Ryan says. He says, little mother, there is nothing finer in all Milton."

"There is nothing half so fine," cried Mrs. Dorrien, who had never been able to finish "Paradise Lost."

"O little mother, little mother; you are worse than Mr. Ryan, and he is bad enough. Don't you think Miriam's speech rather long?"

"Well, perhaps it is," confessed Mrs. Dorrien.

"Yes, but you see, as Mr. Ryan says, if you take out a line you spoil it all."

"And what comes after that speech?"

"Ah! it is not written yet. I mean, not written so as for me to read it to you, but I can tell you what it is about. Jacques the chamois-hunter appears, and sees Miriam. The fact is that, rude, ignorant, and rough as he is, he is bewitched by her spiritual beauty. You see, he has a pretty little foolish betrothed called Rose, but he does not care about her, and, without knowing why, he is always haunting Miriam's steps. Then there is a baron, a real mediæval baron, who wants to carry off Miriam; then there's a hermit, who converts her; and, last of all, Jacques and Miriam flee together, make their way to the sea, and there sail away, and are never heard of more. But all this is quite rough yet, and I have only passages here and there that are really finished. However, I shall look out for publishers to-morrow—but, no, not to-morrow. I must first write out an outline of the subject, and insert the finished passages in their proper places; when that is done, I shall look out for a publisher. Mr. Ryan says there is no doubt that I shall get a handsome sum for it. Of course I must part with the copyright, for Mr. Ryan, who knows all about publishing—he wrote a book on 'Irish Antiquities,' you know—says publishers are too sharp to let such a thing as 'Miriam' slip out of their fingers without securing it. However, when it comes to my second poem, I shall make my own terms, of course. And now, little mother," added John, with his brightest smile, "you know all about my 'Aladdin's Lamp,' and how I mean to pay Mrs. Henry."

Mrs. Dorrien looked at him, and was mute, but she could have cried aloud in her anguish, it was so great. So this was the end of her weary seven years—an unfinished scholar, a boy poet; and this was how John meant to pay Mrs. Henry in a fortnight—nay, in a week. She did not speak at once, she could not trust herself with speech. At length she said:

"The poem is not finished; how, then, can a publisher give you money?"

"Mr. Ryan's 'Irish Antiquities' was not finished, and he got money for it," replied John, with a secure smile. "Bless you, little mother, I know all about it."

Again Mrs. Dorrien was silent. She felt helpless and powerless. Johnny, once so submissive, was strangely

altered. He was self-confident, self-reliant, and he had been so buoyed up by that Mr. Ryan, that, with all his fondness for her, her opinion, and she saw it very well, was of no account. She knew little enough of poetry—nothing of publishing, but she knew life, and John's "Lamp of Aladdin" filled her with silent despair. Her first act was to go down, see Mrs. Henry, and try to undo the fatal effect of John's grand ways. She had some trouble in pacifying that angry lady—angry especially at having been called "Madam." "I never was called Madam before, Mrs. Dorrien," said she—"never!"

"He meant no harm," pleaded the mother; "he is only a boy, Mrs. Henry; you have boys of your own—dear, good boys, I know; don't be angry with mine."

She tried to smile at Mrs. Henry, who relented a little, but would pretend not to do so; and thus the quarrel was half made up, and Mrs. Dorrien, having indulged in a few bitter tears on the dark and silent staircase, went back to her son.

John was writing when Mrs. Dorrien opened the door. A brilliant idea had come to him, and he was putting it down lest it should escape. How handsome he looked, in his mother's eyes, as he sat bending forward, with the light shining on his intellectual face, and his long white fingers thrust through the curls of his brown hair.

"What are you doing, dear?" she asked, coming up to him and leaning over his chair.

"Going on with the outline of Miriam," he answered, with sparkling eyes. "Oh! little mother, if I can only carry out my idea, what a grand thing it will be!"

She sat down and watched him with a sort of a dull despair. So far, at least, as speech went, she let him have his own way. She even listened to more passages from "Miriam the Jewess," and praised them; but when they parted for the night, John sitting up to go on with his "outline," Mrs. Dorrien gave way to her grief.

For hours she lay awake that night, watching the pale moonlight on her window-blinds, counting every hour that struck in the clock of Kensington Church, and saying to herself over and over again—"Oh, God help me! What have I done—what have I done!"

Sermons have been written on the vanity of human de-

sires—ever in vain. Man will not submit to Providence—man will, if he can, rule and govern his little world. Mrs. Dorrien's world was a child; she had early decreed that her boy should have a classical education, and, now that her object was wellnigh accomplished, she was in despair at her success. She had committed a fatal mistake—she knew it, but only made the discovery in order to fall into another no less fatal than the first. She had raised John too high—she now wondered how she could bring him down. When Heaven, by placing her in poverty, seemed to show her the humble path which her boy must tread, Mrs. Dorrien had rebelled against the lesson; and when John came back to her, unfitted for the commoner ways of life, Mrs. Dorrien rebelled again. So while the youth sat up full of ardor and faith, longing for success, money, and fame, feeling sure of them all—had he not Mr. Ryan's verdict for it?—his mother lay awake planning and plotting how best to counteract all his hopes and lay them in the dust; and scarcely had wish and prayer been fashioned in her breast when they seemed to be heard. And when they had been heard, indeed, and the mother had drawn her son away from that beautiful world of fancy to which she had done so much to lure him, when, wearied with cares and often pierced with sorrow, John Dorrien almost wished that his days were over, and that, like the hireling, he had won his wages, when all his young illusions had faded out of the pages of his book of life, as the bark which bore Miriam the Jewess and her lover had faded away on the far sea-horizon of the poem that was never finished, then Mrs. Dorrien wept and lamented that her prayer had been heard, but was not yet corrected, and would, had she been able to do so, have again made out John's life according to her own ideas of what his happiness should be.

CHAPTER VI.

"ONLY fancy, little mother," said John, the next morning at breakfast, "I quite forgot telling you last night, but there are—there actually are Dorriens, English Dorriens,

in Paris. Mr. Blackmore has told me so. Has any thing fallen?" added John, as he saw his mother stoop, as if to pick up something from the floor.

"I have got it," she said, looking up again. "What were you saying?"

"There are English Dorriens in Paris," repeated John.

Mrs. Dorrien was always pale now, so she could not be said to turn pale on hearing him; but yet the life-blood deserted her cheeks, and left them sallow. Her eyes grew dull, her lips parted, and she put down her cup nervously.

"You are not well," said John, alarmed.

"Only a spasm—do not mind it. What about these Dorriens?"

"Well, there is only one, for Mr. Dorrien's son is dead. It is quite a long story, little mother. These Dorriens left England with King James, but, instead of entering the French army, or trying to rise like gentlemen, since they were such by birth, they founded a commercial establishment in Paris, and the house exists still—more than a hundred years old, says Mr. Blackmore. A great wholesale house for fancy stationery, note and letter-paper, and envelopes. There were a good many Dorriens formerly, but some returned to England and staid there—I wonder if we are related to them?—and now there is only one French Dorrien left. I don't know why I call him a French Dorrien, for he was born in England, and his wife was an Englishwoman. Well, he is immensely rich, has a most extensive business, to which he is quite a slave, is up at his work at six in the morning, and is never in bed before twelve at night. Mammon! Mammon!" said the youthful philosopher, shaking his head over Mr. Dorrien.

"Mr. Blackmore seems to know a great deal about Mr. Dorrien," said Mrs. Dorrien.

"I am not sure that he has ever seen him; but he has seen his house, and gives a most picturesque account of it. Such an old, old house, in an old part of Paris, built round a court-yard, and with a large garden behind—a garden with trees that have stood a century, little mother; and just fancy an ancient marble fountain, with a heathen river-god pouring water out of his stone urn, and—little mother, have you another spasm?" asked John, breaking off in his narrative to look anxiously at his mother's face.

"I am subject to them," she replied faintly; "but just open the window, will you? the air will revive me."

John obeyed; he threw the window open; he came back to his mother, and was full of concern. "O little mother," he said, sorrowfully, "how altered you are! You never had spasms formerly — you never had any thing."

"Yes, yes, people will alter," said Mrs. Dorrien, a little impatiently. "I am better now. Shut the window, dear. What about that Mr. Dorrien? How old is he?—has he any children?"

John answered that Mr. Dorrien's son, the only child he had ever had, had died some time ago. Mrs. Dorrien sipped her tea, and made no comment. Then all of a sudden she became inquisitive about Mr. Blackmore. What sort of a man was he? Where did his brother die, and where was Mr. Blackmore staying? At the Charing-Cross Hotel? How odd! That was the last place she, Mrs. Dorrien, would have fancied a man like Mr. Blackmore would stop at. John gave her a puzzled look, but he had nothing to say for or against the Charing-Cross Hotel.

Breakfast was over. Mrs. Dorrien went to her room, and presently returned dressed to go out.

"I do not want you, dear," said she, forestalling his proposal to accompany her. "I would rather you went on with your outline."

"It will be finished to-day, little mother. I can take it to a publisher to-morrow. He can give me an answer after to-morrow, and we can settle about terms and all that on the next day. So you see," conclusively added John, "that I have plenty of time to go out with you."

"Not this morning, dear," said his mother. "I am only going on some tiresome business."

"To-day is Tuesday," said John, counting on his fingers; "let me see; Wednesday, Thursday, Friday—little mother, 'Miriam' will be disposed of on Saturday or Monday next at the latest, so you need not worry about business, or about that horrid woman below," he added, with a look of disgust, as he thought of Mrs. Henry. But Mrs. Dorrien persisted in going out on her tiresome business, and also in declining John's society. He should accompany her another time, said she; so she kissed him tenderly, gave him a

wistful look, and slipped down-stairs as hastily as if she had feared lest he should follow her.

John had no such thought; John was blest in the society of "Miriam the Jewess," and had no suspicion that his mother had gone out in order to divide him from that beautiful maiden forever. Ah! happy hours of young poet-love, hours tender and pure, why are you so fleeting? John Dorrien is not a young man now—he has had his share of human bliss and woe, but he always looks back to that morning spent with "Miriam" in his mother's sitting-room on the second floor of the Kensington lodgings, with fond and sad recollection. He loved this "Miriam" so entirely! He was not jealous of Jacques a bit. Why should he be? Save when the chamois-hunter was required for dramatic action, John ignored him, and unscrupulously appropriated the dark-eyed, high-souled Jewess, lovely twin-sister of Scott's "Rebecca." He had her now; he sat down by her side in the gloom and freshness of the grand old forest-trees, where the green ferns grew high around them, where the wild deer sped by; while the thrush sang sweetly on the boughs above their heads, and where not even a faint murmur of the far-away world could steal in through the low, dim horizon that inclosed them. But no, Miriam wanted freer air than that of forests; besides, John Dorrien was not sure that they abounded in the Pyrenees; so these two wandered together in a mountain solitude, where the gray torrent leaped down among brown rocks, and passed, all wrath and foam, between its barren shores.

On they went, climbing till they reached a savage peak, whence they viewed the kingdoms of this world lying below at their feet. They saw that world of men and the dun smoke of its cities; the waving corn and the green pastures of its tilled lands; the glancing light of its rivers pouring down to the sea, they saw, too; and, though they held it fair, they loved it not. Had not they (Miriam and John Dorrien) tested its worthlessness? From where they stood could they not survey the ruins of Greece and Rome, and the battle-fields of to-day? Did they not know what became of the dust of conquests, and what was the end of mighty armadas? Then would they not let that false world go by, and live their own life in their blest solitude? How they were to fare up there, John Dorrien did not think fit

to say; and we may be sure did not, even in his own thoughts, inquire. Why should he? "Miriam the Jewess" was beyond human wants; and the John Dorrien who climbed the mountain-peak with her partook of her nature. The other John Dorrien, who was now working so hard at a dramatic poem, was a very different person indeed. He wanted success and fame, and plenty of them; he wanted money, and, though not covetous by nature, he wanted plenty of it too. For this John Dorrien was very practical, after a fashion, and, though he might gaze down on the kingdoms of this world with sublime contempt (in Miriam's company), he knew very well, and had known from his childhood, poor fellow! that there is no doing without gold or silver. That his dramatic poem would speedily get him an ample supply of both, he did not doubt; but, indeed, what did John Dorrien doubt? That he was a true poet he felt quite sure; that his dramatic poem would live as long as the English language was equally certain—as certain that he, John Dorrien, would be, or ought to be, buried in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey. If he had not had this faith in himself, he could not have written a line, for he was proud, and hated mediocrity. But, though he was not vainer than most clever boys of his age, his classical education, the consciousness of his great natural gifts, and his entire success in all he had hitherto attempted, rendered his illusion easy. It was sweet and fair, and, while it lasted, filled his young life with enchantment. This, one of its last hours, brimmed over with delight. We are told that Circe mingled the wine of Pramnium and new honey in the cup which she handed to the companions of Ulysses; and so there were various ingredients in that cup which John Dorrien now mixed up so pleasantly for himself. There was money for his mother, and all her missing furniture brought back; there was the pride she would take in her son's success, and there were, too, the tears she would shed when she saw his dramatic poem printed, and looked up from the title-page to his dead father's portrait, that pale, mild, sad image now gazing down from the wall at John Dorrien. Surely all this was sweet as new honey to the boy's generous heart; but strong and intoxicating as the wine of the Greek sorceress was the thrilling thought which made his gray eyes flash and sparkle with fire—"You, too,

will be one of that glorious company," it said, as he looked at the well-remembered volumes on his mother's bookshelves—Virgil's Eclogues—his father's copy—a few of Shakespeare's plays, and Milton's poems.

Can such bliss fall to the lot of mortals? Alas! very rarely. And, though John did not suspect it, his mother, whose pale face now looked in at him from the door, smiling faintly, had gone out to seek a spell more potent than that of the white-blossomed Moly; a spell which drained the cup of all its sweetness, and destroyed its magic forever.

"My dear, are you not working too hard?" said Mrs. Dorrien, coming in; "you are so flushed."

"And you, little mother, are so pale."

"I am always pale now," replied Mrs. Dorrien, with a half-sigh; "at least, I think so—for I have had no one to tell me about it."

She sat down, and pressed her hand to her side. If John lacked the true poetic genius, he failed in none of the poetic sensitiveness. A boy at school had had a pain in his side, and had died. Was his mother going to die? Miriam vanished as the dread thought shot through him. He was afraid, he was, that his little mother was not well. Should he run for the doctor?

"The doctor!" echoed Mrs. Dorrien, sharply; but she checked herself, and declined mildly medical interference. At the same time, she confessed she was not very well; and, if Johnny did not mind staying with her that day, and not going out, she would like it.

"Mind it!" cried Johnny—"of course not." He would stay with her, and read her more of Miriam, for he had been working hard while she was out.

Mrs. Dorrien winced at the proposal, but would not decline listening to that dramatic poem of John's, which was to work such wonders for them both. She reclined on the sofa, and John read with all the passion and enthusiasm of one whose heart has been, and is still, in his work. Mrs. Dorrien watched his flushed face and sparkling eyes, and felt so miserable that she had to look away. Why or how had he taken this dreadful fancy for poetry? It was a perfect infatuation, and she saw no cure for it. She could not bear it; and, saying she felt exhausted and wanted to sleep,

she turned her face to the wall, while John renewed his labors.

Mrs. Dorrien rallied a little in the afternoon, but she could eat no dinner—perhaps, poor woman! to leave plenty for John. She took some tea, however; and, after tea, she inspected John's wardrobe. She made sad discoveries there, and was very angry with the *lingère* at Saint-Ives.

"Why, John," she said, quite crossly, "what has become of that set of collars which I sent you last year? I made and stitched them myself—and now do just see the state they are in!"

She held one up in indignant amazement; but John, who was thinking whether his poem on solitude ("A charming lyric," said Mr. Ryan) would not do very well spoken by Miriam—

> "O Solitude, when you and I
> First met upon the wild sea-shore,
> And waited for the coming roar
> Of waves, or heard the sea-bird's cry"—

John, we say, expressed his regret at his mother's annoyance, but without that degree of angry warmth which, in Mrs. Dorrien's opinion, the occasion required.

"You are quite taken up with your poetry," said Mrs. Dorrien, rather sharply.

"Of course I am, little mother," he answered, gayly; "I mean to make quite a grand thing of it. And, if you had not been so poorly, I should have gone round to see Oliver Blackmore."

"Why so?" asked his mother, quietly.

"Why, to ask him to help me to get the proper information about a publisher. I don't want to go to the wrong house, you understand."

"My dear," nervously said his mother, putting down the damaged collar, "do not be in a hurry. Mrs. Henry will have patience for a while. I mean, it will all be better than you think, and—and—I would not show the outline to any one till the poem is more advanced, if I were you."

"You think I ought to write more of it?" said John. "Perhaps the scene between Miriam and Jacques wants to be developed," he suggested, with sparkling eyes.

Mrs. Dorrien thought it did. In a moment John's

manuscript was on the table, and he was up to his ears in Miriam, Jacques, and the Hermit, whom he brought in. Mrs. Dorrien breathed a sigh of relief. Time was her great ally now. Who could say what a few days more might not bring forth?

But his impatience of showing his outline to a publisher returned the next morning, and John would certainly have yielded to it if Mrs. Dorrien had not been so unwell. She complained of no particular ailment, but she seemed miserable when John spoke of leaving her, and at all times she looked harassed and worn. John felt very uneasy about his mother, but his uneasiness only rendered him more anxious to show the outline to a publisher, and, as a preliminary step, to see Oliver Blackmore.

"I must, little mother," he said, early one morning, "I really must; and I shall go before breakfast," he added.

"Very well, do," replied his mother, a little sullenly, for John had spoken in the tone of one who has a will of his own, and who means to use it. He went, but returned earlier than his mother expected him. She gave him a furtive look as he opened the door and came in. John's face was clouded. Mrs. Dorrien's heart began to beat.

"Only think, little mother," he cried, in a vexed tone, "they left last night. I should have gone yesterday."

Mrs. Dorrien was silent, but her face cleared.

"What will you do now?" she had begun to say, when the postman's knock was heard below. Mrs. Dorrien started up, then sank back and bit her lip.

"That dreadful knock!" she said. "It always terrifies me. I always used to think it brought me bad news of my Johnny. I ought not to care, now that you are here, but the old nervousness clings to me still. And yet I know that letter is not for me."

"But it is for you, little mother," said John, who had been listening to various sounds on the stairs during his mother's long explanation, "and I am afraid it is the cause of some difference among the powers that be."

Such was the case. Mrs. Henry had left the parlor to protest against Mary Ann answering the postman's knock, or any one's knock, on behalf of the people on the second-floor. They had a bell—let the bell be used. As to that letter, it might lie on the bracket in the hall till Mrs. Dor-

rien chose to come down. No servant of hers should wear out her stair-carpet on such an errand, etc.

Almost all this John Dorrien had heard. Red as fire, he went down and took the letter from where it lay, while Mrs. Henry, who stood at the parlor-door, and whose bark was worse than her bite, said something about servants having so much to do in a house like hers.

"Oh! certainly," stiffly replied John, who was boiling over with powerless wrath and useless indignation.

As he went up-stairs, with the letter in his hand, he recognized the French stamp. He looked at it more closely, thinking it might be for himself; but no, Mrs. Dorrien was very legibly written upon it, and, what was more, this letter for his mother came from Paris. John was fairly bewildered.

"I suppose Mrs. Henry was rude?" said Mrs. Dorrien, as he entered the room.

"Very rude; but, little mother, this is a Paris letter, and it is actually for you." He handed it to her, with undisguised curiosity in his frank face. Mrs. Dorrien looked very much surprised. A letter from Paris, and for her! Was there no mistake? She seemed to hesitate to open it, and, when she did so at length, it was with a protest that she could not imagine what this meant. John, to whom it did not seem to occur that his mother could have a secret to be kept from him, stood leaning against the mantel-piece, looking earnestly at her while she read. The letter was not a long one, yet it took Mrs. Dorrien some time to go through it; and, when she had finished it, she folded it up, put it into the envelope, and laid it on the table; then she raised her eyes, and looked earnestly in her son's face.

"John," she said, after a brief pause, which seemed eternal, so silent were these two, so hushed was the room, "I have something to tell you."

John showed no token of surprise; he knew very well that his mother had something to tell him, and he was even not very far from divining what that something was.

"You mentioned a family of the name of Dorrien the other day," she resumed, "a commercial family, established in Paris. John, it is your family. The last head of that old commercial firm was your great-grandfather. Your

father and the present Mr. Dorrien were first-cousins. When I married your father, he took me home to the old house you described to me the other morning. There is not a room in it that I am not familiar with. Those large, dark, old rooms, how well I know them! And you, my boy, were born in one of them, and, as a little child, you have played on the grass near the old fountain of the river-god, with his marble urn."

Something in these remembrances proved too much for Mrs. Dorrien; she laid her head across the table, near which she was sitting, and wept bitterly.

John never moved from the mantel-shelf, against which he stood leaning. Prepared by intuition though he was for what was coming, he had heard her with amazement and some sorrow. All these years his mother had deceived him; all these years she had spoken as though he and she were alone in the world, without kith or kin; all these years she had given him to understand that he was born in some remote part of England. Therefore he said nothing —he felt that he had nothing to say. He had no right to reproach her in speech, and he was silent; but in his heart he knew that he had been cheated and wronged out of that great inheritance—the truth.

"And now," said Mrs. Dorrien, looking up and drying her tears—"now, John, you may read that letter. It is from your father's cousin, Mr. Dorrien."

"We have done without him all these years, little mother," said John, coldly; "what do we want with him now?"

Mrs. Dorrien colored.

"The fault may have been mine," she said; "as soon as he heard about us from Mr. Blackmore, he writes."

"Did he require a stranger's account to hear about us?" said John, still speaking coldly.

Mrs. Dorrien looked nervous.

"John," she said, in a low voice, and without looking at her son, "that letter is more for you than for me. Read it, then see what you have to say to it. I shall leave you free."

CHAPTER VII.

THE storm which swept James Stuart and his dynasty away from the throne of England sent many a humbler line than that royal one into exile. It was the boast of the Dorriens that they had given up all, house, land, and country, for the sake of their sovereign. Their old hall in the north passed into the hands of strangers; their ancestral acres were tilled for new masters; another race than that of the Dorriens saw its stalwart sons and blooming daughters grow into strength and beauty round what had once been their hearth. True, the Dorriens had never been very great —most true, they had never been very wealthy; but they were a race tenacious of their own, and who felt its loss keenly; a proud, stubborn, touchy race, who soon found out that they were of little account in Saint-Germain, and that there was sad wisdom in the voice of him who first said, "Put not your faith in princes."

The Dorriens did not complain—they were too proud for that. They did not return to England, to be branded as renegades by the vanquished Jacobites, or to be scorned for their poverty and fallen estate by the triumphant followers of William and Mary. They did what they had ever done since they had borne the name of Dorrien: they shaped their own course, and fought their own hard battle. No one ever exactly knew how they began—the Dorriens were not fond of talking about it; they also knew how to keep their own counsel, and they had found it hard enough to lay down the sword and estate of gentlemen without adding to the hardship of their lot by laying it bare to the world's cold eye. They wanted no help, no pity, and they did very well without either. They had already pushed their way up and made money, when, in the year 17—, they founded the great firm of Dorrien, La Maison Dorrien, as it was called in the Marais.

Fashion was already deserting, and wholesale commerce invading, that once aristocratic neighborhood of Paris. Among its ancient dwellings was one which the Dorriens were rich enough to purchase from its spendthrift owner. It was a large, old hotel, going to decay, in a gloomy, winding street. A tall gateway, studded with rusty iron

knobs, shut it in from the outer world. It stood between a wide, grass-grown court and a large, green garden, which spreading trees filled with cool shade. This garden the Dorriens did not touch—they kept inviolate its old trees, where the birds sang in spring, its graveled paths, and its old stone fountain ever pouring out water with a low murmur.

The house, which was three stories high, with a lofty roof, narrow windows, iron balconies, and a *perron*, they kept for their private residence; the low buildings that inclosed the court, giving it a cloister-like aspect, and one side of which had been a ballroom, they devoted to business. Other changes they did not make. They did not alter the inconvenient old rooms to modern taste and uses. What they could keep of the old furniture they kept. Maybe they pitied that fallen race on whose decay they were thriving, and, remembering their last Dorrien home, were lenient to this. But they made it bear their name, and had that name engraved above the gate, with the date of their entrance—1720. Here, in that year of grace, they set up their household gods; here they dwelt a hundred years and more, proud, retiring, and prosperous, strangers in the land where they throve and made their wealth. Unlike the Irish exiles, these English Dorriens never amalgamated with the French. Their blood never mingled with that of their hereditary foes, and, like the French Protestants in England, they kept up the old language, the old feelings, and, so far as they could, the old Dorrien race. Whenever there was peace between the two countries, the heir of the Dorriens sailed across the seas, made his way to the north of England, and there sought and generally found some maiden of Dorrien lineage, whom he wedded and brought back. And so the family was perpetuated, the name lived on, and the firm of Dorrien, after weathering many a storm, a terrible one in ninety-three, and an awkward one under the Napoleonic era, more than fulfilled its century, and was a great firm still, the oldest, if not the greatest, in all that part of Paris where it had first laid its seat. Mr. George Dorrien was the head of the firm at the time of which we write, and he had been so for some years. He was a handsome man of fifty, tall, languid, and prematurely gray. He had been reared in

England and spoke French well, but with a slight English accent. He liked neither France nor the French nation, nor French ways, but he was amiable, and endured the country, the people, and their manners. The life of an English country gentleman was that which he would have preferred, and that which he thought to lead when he married Miss Kenelm the heiress. Before she came into her property, however, circumstances occurred which compelled Mr. George Dorrien to do as his fathers had done before him, and to become the head of the Maison Dorrien. He submitted, but he did not like it. His wife died young; leaving but one child, a boy, George Dorrien, like his father, who grew up willful, wicked, and so unlovable that his grandfather, Mr. Kenelm, disinherited him by his will, and died a week after signing it. Mr. George Dorrien bore that too, and did not even say much to his son on the subject. He was aware that it would be useless; moreover, he liked a quiet life, and to say the truth he cared very little about George Dorrien, junior. He knew that the great tradition of their house was broken; that this worthless boy would never take up the hereditary task, nor carry on the old name with honor. It was hard, but it could not be helped, and no one ever heard Mr. Dorrien complain that this adverse fortune was his. He did not marry again. Mr. George Dorrien rarely made two experiments of the same kind. He asked Mrs. Reginald Dorrien, his cousin's widow, to keep house for him; the lady came; he liked neither her appearance nor her manners, but what was done was done, and he endured her with that amiable fatalism which was one of the traits of his character. He endured many things in that passive spirit, among the rest the flight of his son, who vanished one night from Paris, kindly leaving his debts behind him, and who was not heard of for three years.

Mr. George Dorrien had a confidential clerk, who had been thirty years in the service of the Maison Dorrien. His name was Brown; he was steady, industrious, and trustworthy; but he was not a man of many ideas, and, though his youth and manhood had been spent in Paris, he had never fully mastered the mysteries of the French idiom. There were French clerks, who wrote the French letters, or who dealt with French customers; Mr. Brown was a

sort of extra, for Mr. Dorrien's own use; nevertheless it was generally understood that Mr. Dorrien could not have done without Mr. Brown, and, whenever the master of the house was out of the way, Mr. Brown ruled supreme.

Now, one evening, in the winter of the year 18—, Mr. Dorrien, who was fond of music, went to the Italian opera, and left Mr. Brown as usual in command of the firm. There was some extra work, and two of the clerks remained beyond their time to do it. They sat in the counting-house, a small room on the ground-floor; each at a desk on a high stool, each scribbling away as if for dear life, each grumbling at Monsieur Brown as the cause of this extra task, which deprived them of an evening's pleasure; for was it not Monsieur Brown who, by his lamentable ignorance of the French language, had laid this additional burden of fourteen letters on their devoted backs?

"Ah! but," argued Durand, the younger clerk, "let us be fair. What would become of us if Monsieur Brown knew French?"

"True," answered his companion Leroux, whose pen continued to fly over his paper, "most true. Without Monsieur Brown's French to relax our minds, existence—"

Here the door of Monsieur Brown's private room opened, and he appeared on the threshold, with a frown on his high yellow forehead. Monsieur Brown, or rather Mr. Brown, was a man of fifty-five, neat, methodical, and stolid. He frowned as a part of his business authority, but the frown was an exertion of Mr. Brown's will, not of his temper. He belonged to the imperturbable order of men. He was never ruffled, never discomposed, never communicative or reticent. Whether, indeed, he had feelings of any kind was more than any one knew, but every one did know that he was impenetrable, and never uttered one syllable more than he intended uttering. All he now said was, coldly regarding the two youths, who, with a slightly raised color had returned to their task, and whose pens flew once more over the paper—all, we say, that Mr. Brown said, was the one word—"*Fini?*"

Very volubly he was informed that the fourteen letters were nearly finished. Mr. Brown held out his hand, ten letters were put into it; he read them one by one—he could read French perfectly—returned four to Durand, and

three to Leroux; then tore three letters, and, placing the torn fragments of two letters on Durand's desk, and of one letter on Leroux's, he returned to his own room, and closed the door on himself.

Monsieur Durand raised his hands to his head, as if bent on rending his glossy and highly-scented locks; and Monsieur Leroux doubled up his fists, and was walking up to Mr. Brown's door in that warlike attitude, when it opened again, and he shrank away abashed, as Mr. Brown appeared once more.

"*Vite*," he said, and closed the door.

Monsieur Leroux threw himself back in an attitude of mock despair, and exclaimed, in a deep, but subdued voice, "Lost! Lost! Undone!"

Whereupon Monsieur Durand pathetically entreated him not to expire.

While these two youths—the older one was not eighteen—went on with their light comedy in the counting-house, and Mr. Brown was nodding over *Galignani's Messenger* in his room, tragedy, in the shape of a telegram, was turning round the corner of the street, and approaching the home of the Dorriens. The messenger happened to be a new man, and, as the telegram was simply directed to "Monsieur Dorrien, Rue de la Dame au Marais," he, having no number to guide him, was obliged to apply to a shopkeeper for information.

"Dorrien!" said the man. "Why, there is the house before you, close by the gas-light."

The man looked. A pane in the lamp had been broken by the stone of some mischievous urchin, the light flared in the wintry wind, and flickered across a tall, dark gate before him. Above the gate was a defaced escutcheon, supported by two calm, stone, giant heads, and above these he read, not painted on a board, as in the houses on either side, but deeply cut in the stone, as if defying time, the name of DORRIEN, and beneath it the date, 1720. He crossed the street; he raised the huge iron knocker, and let it fall again heavily. The door in the gate opened noiselessly, and a woman, coming out of the porter's lodge with a light in her hand, asked him what he wanted. Oh! it was a telegram for Monsieur Dorrien, was it? Then would he please to come this way? She crossed a wide, paved court, be-

yond which a tall house rose dimly in the dark night, went up the steps of the *perron*, pushed a door open, entered a flagged hall, and, opening another door, showed him into the counting-house. Durand was just then administering comfort to Leroux. A telegram for Monsieur Dorrien! Oh! then Monsieur Brown was the person to give the receipt. So Monsieur Brown's door was tapped at, and, Monsieur Brown having said "*Entrez*," with that peculiar intonation which was the delight of Durand's youthful heart, the messenger stood in the presence of Mr. Dorrien's confidential clerk. He was as laconic as even Monsieur Brown could wish him to be. Monsieur's signature there, and seven francs fifty centimes was all he asked. He got both signature and money, counted and pocketed the one, never looked at the other, and went his way, escorted by the portress. When he had reached the great gate, he said to the woman, "What do they sell here?"

"Paper."

"And who lives in those low buildings round the court? The workmen?"

"No—paper. Then she added, explanatorily, "We want no men. We do not make paper here. We only store it, and sell it wholesale."

"And that date above the gate, what does it mean?" asked the man, who seemed to be of an inquiring turn.

"We founded the firm in 1720," replied the portress, in a tone that said, "Who are you, and where do you come from, that you have never heard of the firm of Dorrien?"

"Ah, well, I was not born then," said the man. "Good-night," and he vanished down the dark street.

Mr. Brown, sitting in his room, opened the telegram, read it through, turned round the page to see that there was nothing more, then folded it up neatly, put it in his pocket, and looked at his watch. A quarter to nine—the fourteen letters must be finished by this. Well, the fourteen letters were finished, and Mr. Brown had no need to tear any of them up this time. He nodded his silent approval. Durand and Leroux sprang to their feet, cleared pens, ink, and paper, away by magic, and were gone in a twinkling.

While they crossed the court, talking and laughing like school-boys, Mr. Brown locked the counting-house door, returned to his own sitting-room, lit a little lamp, which he

had there for that purpose, and went on his usual night round. Through every one of those wide rooms built round the court, all stored with reams upon reams of paper piled to the very ceiling, he went, making every door fast behind him. There were many rooms, and Mr. Brown's principle was "slow, but sure." He now took his time; he never was in a hurry; he scanned every shelf with a searching eye; he looked at the boarded floors, at the curtainless windows, with their strong wooden shutters, at the ceilings, with their faded Cupids toying in faded clouds, and especially he sniffed the chill air of those empty rooms, asking them for the faintest scent of fire. Mr. Dorrien's premises had narrowly escaped being burned down a year before this, and it was in consequence of this peril that Mr. Brown had undertaken his present task of surveillance. The round took him fully three-quarters of an hour, and, when it was ended, it brought him back to the flagged hall at the foot of the staircase, which led to Mr. Dorrien's private apartments.

Mr. Brown did not live in Mr. Dorrien's house. He could have done so, had he so chosen. Mr. Dorrien had rooms to spare, and Mr. Brown, being single, could not possibly have been troublesome; but, though Mr. Brown was at his desk by seven in the morning, and often did not leave it till ten at night, it pleased him to have "his own home," as he termed the dull and cheerless tenement which he rented on the third-floor back of a neighboring house. Mr. Brown often dined with Mr. Dorrien and Mrs. Reginald Dorrien, and, whether he did so or not, he never left the house without bidding Mrs. Reginald, as she was called, for brevity's sake, a good-evening. Such was his purpose now, as he slowly went up the great oaken staircase, with its carved iron balusters, all flowers and scroll-work; and, having reached the second-floor, he tapped discreetly at the door of Mrs. Reginald's sitting-room.

"Come in," said a deep voice—a voice, indeed, almost too deep to belong to one of the gentler sex—and, thus authorized, Mr. Brown entered.

Mrs. Reginald's sitting-room did credit to that lady's taste. It was bright, warm, and pleasant. Brilliant flowers had been scattered by a liberal hand on the carpet; the paper on the walls was rich and dark, the furniture was

handsome and almost luxurious, and Mrs. Reginald herself wore a rich, stiff silk that rustled with every motion of her stately person. We say stately, because we wish to be civil; gaunt and bony would be more correct epithets. Mrs. Reginald could not help these disadvantages, any more than she could help her chest-voice, and the accident which, by depriving her in early youth of her left eye, had given the remaining orb a dark, not to say sinister, expression. In plain speech, Mrs. Reginald was what was called ugly. She knew it—she was very quick, very clever, very sharp, and very shrewd; nevertheless, when Reginald Dorrien, worthless shoot of the good stock, assured her that he was in love with her, she believed him, and was only undeceived when he absconded with her little fortune of two thousand pounds two weeks after the wedding-day. He died soon after this, leaving her penniless. Mr. George Dorrien had then just lost his wife; all he knew of his cousin's widow was that she had been ill-used, and that her personal appearance was enough to scare away scandal. He proposed that she should come and keep house for him, and Mrs. Reginald gladly accepted.

Mr. George Dorrien was a fastidious man; his wife had been pretty, and he liked pretty faces. He was shocked when he saw Mrs. Reginald, but he was too courteous and amiable to betray the feeling. His forbearance was rewarded by such a house-keeper as falls to the lot of few single men. Mrs. Reginald was Irish, and she had a variety of gifts which is one of the attributes of the Celtic race. She learned French in no time; she ruled French servants with amazing tact and shrewdness; she reduced her cousin's expenditure one-third, and yet kept a liberal house—in short, she did wonders, and Mr. George Dorrien knew it, and was both generous and grateful, but it was not in his power to like Mrs. Reginald. Her appearance was to him what a bad drawing, her voice what a discordant note in music, are to connoisseurs, and her sharp, pungent, pitiless speech what all unconventional speech must be to a polished man of the world. Such was the lady who now rose, with no little rustling of her stiff, rich silk skirt, to welcome Mr. Brown.

"You are late this evening, Mr. Brown," she said, pointing to an arm-chair before the fire, and resuming her own.

"We had many letters, many letters," replied Mr. Brown, who found compensation for his forced laconism in French by a certain redundance in English. "Do you know where Mr. Dorrien spends this evening, Mrs. Reginald?"

"He is gone to the Italian Opera—but only for an hour or so. I know he leaves before the ballet. What do you want him for?"

Mrs. Reginald's one eye seemed to bore Mr. Brown through and through.

"I thought I had better go and seek him—seek him, Mrs. Reginald; but, if he leaves before the ballet, I think—yes, I think I shall wait."

"Can you tell me what it is about?" asked the lady, point-blank. "If it is business, keep it to yourself; if not, out with it, man, and don't beat about the bush."

"It is not business, Mrs. Reginald," slowly replied Mr. Brown; "but the telegram was directed to Mr. Dorrien, and perhaps I had better not tell you—yes, I think I had better not," said Mr. Brown, thoughtfully.

Mrs. Reginald looked up at the ceiling, folded her hands, and tapped her feet.

"How old are you, Mr. Brown?"

"I am fifty-five, Mrs. Reginald."

"Fifty-five! and you only 'think,' you don't 'know' whether you ought to tell me or not. Now, Mr. Brown, a man of fifty-five who only 'thinks,' and does not 'know,' is simply absurd. When I was nine years old, Mr. Brown, I did not think, I knew what I meant to say or do."

"You are a very superior woman, Mrs. Reginald, very superior," replied Mr. Brown; but he did not tell Mrs. Reginald what the telegram was about.

"I know it is about George," she said, sitting straight up in her chair, and with her one dark eye full upon Mr. Brown's stolid face—"I know it is—he has turned up at last."

Mr. Brown rubbed his nose, but remained imperturbable.

"He was wicked at nurse, wicked at school, wicked at the desk—George will be wicked to the end, Mr. Brown."

Mr. Brown nodded slowly, but whether in approbation or dissent it was hard to say.

"And if he had a particle of shame or pride or honor,"

said Mrs. Reginald, kindling, "he would die, Mr. Brown, he would die, and drag down his sins and misdeeds with him into the grave, and set a tombstone, a heavy one, over them —a tombstone on which there should be written no epitaph."

But Mrs. Reginald's passion—and it was genuine, for she was imaginative and vehement, as well as sharp and shrewd—could wake no corresponding echo in Mr. Brown's matter-of-fact mind.

"No epitaph would be unbusiness-like, unbusiness-like, Mrs. Reginald," he answered, sedately. "I do not think Mr. Dorrien would allow that."

"Then he is dead!" she cried, almost rising from her chair; and sinking down in it again, she exclaimed, "Thank Heaven!" Then, as if to explain her meaning, she added more calmly, "at least, he can sin no more."

"Excuse me Mrs. Reginald, I did not say that Mr. George Dorrien was dead."

But Mrs. Reginald interrupted him with an impatient wave of her bony hand.

"There, there," she said, "that will do—keep your secret and your telegram—poor boy, poor Georgie!" she added, with a sudden rush of tears, "he was a bad boy, a very bad boy, but I remember the little fellow, with his red sash, and his varnished boots, that he was so proud of, and now—" Here the door opened, and Mr. Dorrien entered the room.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Reginald," he said, with his usual courtesy, "I believe I came in without knocking." It was Mrs. Reginald whom he addressed, and Mr. Brown that he looked at. "I understood," he continued, still looking at the head-clerk, "that a telegram had come, and I knew, of course, that I should find Mr. Brown here."

Mr. Brown, who had risen, coughed, and Mr. Dorrien, walking up to the fireplace, leaned languidly—he was always languid—against the marble mantel-piece, still looking at Mr. Brown. Mr. Dorrien was a tall, pale, worn man, with regular features and pale-blue eyes, that said very little, as a rule, of what might be going on within their owner's mind; but just now there shone in those blue eyes something like an anxious gleam of uneasy speculation—as if Mr. Dorrien were prepared for unpleasant news, and hoped for no good tidings.

"I have received a telegram, sir," answered Mr. Brown, in his deliberate fashion; "and it is not about business."

A little sigh of relief escaped Mr. Dorrien, the light died out of his blue eyes, and the interest seemed to pass out of his pale countenance; till with a start as of unpleasant recollection, and a sudden flush, he said:

"Then it is about Mr. George?"

"Yes, sir, it is about Mr. George," said Mr. Brown.

"Well, and what has he been doing now?"

Mr. Brown was silent.

"I understand," said Mr. Dorrien, in a low voice, "he is dead."

"Yes, sir, Mr. George Dorrien is dead."

Mr. Dorrien neither moved nor spoke. He looked like a man on whom a blow has fallen, but he also looked like one who can bear that blow. Nature had not given him that passionate love of offspring which makes doting fathers, and what affection he might have been inclined to bestow on his only child that child had early alienated. His son had wounded him in his love and in his pride, and Mr. Dorrien was not the man to forget it.

"Well, Mr. Brown," he said, after a long pause, during which the room was very still, "what else is there?"

Mr. Brown handed his master the telegram, but Mr. Dorrien shook his head and handed it silently to Mrs. Reginald. It would not have been in that lady's nature to keep, under these circumstances, a solemn and conventional aspect suitable to the occasion. As her cousin offered her this triumph over Mr. Brown, she gave him, Mr. Brown, a nod and a wink of her one eye which might have upset the gravity of another man. But Mr. Brown remained immovable, and looked all decorous seriousness while Mrs. Reginald read the telegram aloud. It was thus worded:

"*Commissaire de Police, Rue Leroy, Marseille,*
to Mr. DORRIEN, *Rue de la Dame, Paris.*

"Traveler, named George Dorrien, died this morning at Hôtel de la Croix, Marseille. Began, but could not finish, letter to his father, G. Dorrien. Lies at hotel. Left a thousand francs in gold, now in my hands. Answer at once by telegram."

"Is that all?" asked Mr. Dorrien, when Mrs. Reginald, folding up the paper, handed it back to him.

"It is all," she answered; and her voice faltered a little, for again a vision of a bright, handsome boy, with laughing blue eyes, had flashed before her.

Mr. Dorrien sighed bitterly, and almost smiled.

"He would have been twenty-two next month," he said; then he added aloud, sharply, as if he resented this slight betrayal, "Mr. Brown, would it be taxing you too much to ask you to go to Marseilles and see to all that dreary business?"

"I can go to Marseilles, sir; but the commissary asks for an immediate answer."

"True; I shall go round to the office and give it myself. When can you go, Mr. Brown?"

Mr. Brown could go to-morrow. There were some little business matters to be attended to, but perhaps Mr. Dorrien would kindly see to them in his (Mr. Brown's) absence. Oh! yes, Mr. Dorrien—and he said it rather wearedly—would see to every thing.

And so the conversation drifted away from death to the doings of life, until the little gilt clock on Mrs. Reginald's mantel-piece struck eleven. Mr. Dorrien heard it with a look of pain, for that very clock, a Cupid letting his arrow fly at Time, had been one of his first presents to his young wife, and had struck the hour when his son was born—not in this room, indeed, nor even in this house, but with that same little clear, silvery voice with which it now seemed to sound his death-knell. Mr. Brown, who had no associations with the clock, took out his watch, thought Mrs. Reginald's timepiece must be five minutes slow, and said it was time for him to be off. Mr. Dorrien, who never cared for a *tête-à-tête* with his cousin's widow, followed him out, and Mrs. Reginald remained alone.

This lady was a philosopher in her way, but she was not a follower of the Peripatetic school. "I do my thinking in my arm-chair," she used to say; and it being considered that Mrs. Reginald was a very active person, who sat but little, the amount of thinking which she did was creditable to the freshness and vigor of her mind. Mrs. Reginald's "thinking" could not be called a diamond of the first water; but then she did not mean it to shine before the

world, or to be set and mounted in any fashion; and so, instead of being neatly cut up into axioms or into sententious epigrams, it was a very loose sort of thing, and might be best likened to a willful nag who galloped off with its owner, or ambled gently into the world of Fancy, as the lady's whim might be. As Mrs. Reginald now sat alone, looking at her fire, brooding over the sad, brief fate of the dead, she soon wandered away from George Dorrien, his boyhood, his sins, and his death, to a fancy that was ever dear to her. Spite her personal disadvantages, Mrs. Reginald had not been able to guard her maiden heart, a true and tender one, from the fond dream of wedded love. She had had two weeks—no more; Reginald Dorrien had behaved admirably for those two weeks—and those fourteen happy days had given the wife a tender desire of which neither sorrow, nor treachery, nor time, had been able to quell the longing.

Mrs. Reginald had wished—eagerly and ardently wished (as she could wish, being a woman of strong will and passions)—to be a mother. Her boy—her Reginald—had been as real to her during those brief hours of her married life as many a babe who sleeps at his mother's breast, or laughs up in his mother's face. She had nursed him, fed him, washed, dressed, and combed him; she had kissed, and scolded, and whipped Reginald. She had taught him his letters, and made him lisp his first prayers at her knee; she had watched him through imaginary illnesses, cured him—spite the doctors; sent him to school, educated him, made him a great man, and, finally, married him to a girl of her own choosing, and then bid him and his young wife a stern adieu. It was his duty—every man's duty—to marry; but she, his mother, who had had him to herself all these years, could not share him with another woman, and be second where she had once been first; and so she, his mother, would leave him to his wife, and go and lead her solitary life.

Now, this day-dream, which ought to have vanished with Reginald's faithless father, did not so depart. It remained behind long after that unprincipled gentleman had fled, and it haunted the deserted woman and clung to her poor sore heart. She had been cheated, betrayed, scorned, contemned, but she knew that the world, as a

rule, keeps its pity for victims of interesting appearance. A tall, gaunt woman of thirty—with one eye too—is not the sort of Ariadne that the world cares much about. But her child—her boy, if she had one—he would feel for her. His heart would burn over her wrongs, even though her wronger was his own father; and, if he could do nothing else, he would, by his honor and love, avenge her.

Alas! that boy—that Reginald the second, as faithless as Reginald the first—never came to heal the bitter wound in his mother's heart. That fond vision of the future faded away into the darkness of the past. Yet Mrs. Reginald always loved him, after a fashion, and—leading, as she did, a solitary life, so far as her feelings were concerned—she kept him in a corner of her heart, and cherished him there.

Sometimes Reginald slept very long; for days and weeks and months he slumbered, and deeper grew his sleep as the years wore on; but a look, a word, a child's face, a boy's gay voice or ringing laugh, could call him up into sudden life, and bring him back once more to his mother's eye.

Now, this evening, as she sat alone, Mrs. Reginald allowed her thoughts to stray from the dead to the dream of her youth.

"My boy—my Reginald—should not have died so," said she, nodding at the fire, "and among cold-hearted strangers—not he; and no Mr. Brown should have gone to bury him. No; if it had pleased God to have called him in the prime of his manhood, his mother would have watched by his death-bed; or if that could not be, yet at least the hands that had rocked the baby to sleep would have laid out the man for his last rest."

Here a tap at the door interrupted Mrs. Reginald's reflections.

"Come in," she said, somewhat sharply—for whenever Mrs. Reginald had allowed this fancy to master her, she was not fond of confronting her kind.

The intruder was Mr. Brown. Mr. Brown had come for the telegram. Had not Mrs. Reginald got it? Really! And Mr. Brown's eyes wandered round the room in search of the missing document.

"Stop!" And Mrs. Reginald, who had risen, and who stood with her back to the fireplace, extended her hand rather imperiously. "Stop, Mr. Brown, if you please; I

want to know what epitaph you will put on the gravestone."

"I think, Mrs. Reginald, that the name and surname of the deceased will do."

"'George Dorrien, aged twenty-two.' I hope you will add, 'Deeply lamented by his father,' Mr. Brown."

"If such should be Mr. Dorrien's wish, Mrs. Reginald—" cautiously began Mr. Brown.

"Bah!" she interrupted, with a look of profound disgust. "I tell you that if I had reared a kitten, I should feel more in learning that it had died than our Mr. Dorrien feels for the death of his only child—of his boy," added Mrs. Reginald, with all the emphasis of her deep voice.

Mr. Brown thought that, as Mrs. Reginald had not got the telegram—

"Stop!" interrupted Mrs. Reginald, taking hold of his arm, and poking the long forefinger of her other hand in the region of Mr. Brown's heart; "can you tell me what our Mr. Dorrien, so refined, so polite, has got there?" Here Mrs. Reginald's finger became more expressive than Mr. Brown wished. "Because, if you cannot, I can," continued Mrs. Reginald, releasing him. "Our Mr. Dorrien has got that," said Mrs. Reginald, raising her forefinger aloft, and deliberately tracing the figure of a gigantic circle in the air—"naught, naught, naught," she added, nodding at Mr. Brown, lest he should not have understood her meaning. "And now, if you want the telegram," she said, in a matter-of-fact, business-like tone, "better ask Mr. Dorrien forit. I gave it back to him."

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Brown went to Marseilles, and saw George Dorrien buried. No pomp marked the funeral of the prodigal son; no epitaph was inscribed on his plain tombstone. Mr. Brown brought back the unfinished letter, but neither that nor any other paper, nor any document found in the possession of Mr. Dorrien's deceased son, gave the least clew to the manner in which he had spent the last three

years of his life. There was nothing and no one to tell how he had become possessed of the thousand francs that were found in his valise when he died. The real place he had come from when he stopped at Marseilles was a mystery. Toulon had been written in the hotel register, but that was evidently a mistake, for Constantinople was marked on his luggage. Mr. Brown did not think it needful to go to the capital of the Turkish Empire in order to make inquiries. It had never been a safe thing to search too closely into Mr. George Dorrien's private affairs. He was dead now, and there was, as it were, an end to him. The very best and kindest thing that could be done was to let him rest in his grave in the cemetery, with the long morning shadow of the cypress-trees falling on his plain stone slab, and the hot Provençal sun resting upon it day after day.

When Mr. Brown came home, and repeated to Mr. Dorrien the few meagre particulars which he had been able to collect concerning "Mr. George," the bereaved father heard him out and made no other comment than a grave and rather sad "I am much obliged to you, Mr. Brown."

Mrs. Reginald, when she heard Mr. Brown's account, observed sharply:

"It is just as well, Mr. Brown, not to know too much about some people, and George Dorrien never did a more considerate thing than to die off as he did."

Some time after his son's premature death, Mr. Dorrien went to England, partly for business and partly for a change. He remained several weeks away, and during his absence Mr. Brown reigned supreme. Of course he opened all the letters, and thus it came to pass that a letter directed to Monsieur George Dorrien, Hôtel de la Croix, Marseilles, was forwarded to Monsieur George Dorrien, Rue de la Dame, Paris, and was opened and read by Mr. Brown. He had been specially authorized to do so by his master, who had indeed foreseen this particular case, and warned him by no means to wait for his return.

"There is no knowing," he said rather drearily, "what sort of letters requiring immediate attention may come for my son—and I have no family secrets from you, Brown."

"You are very good, sir, very good; but the responsibility, sir—the responsibility may be very great."

Mr. Dorrien candidly confessed that it might be so; then after a moment's thought: "If you should be at a loss," he said, "consult Mrs. Reginald. She is shrewd and sensible."

Now the letter which Mr. Brown received on a morning in February, six weeks after the death of Mr. Dorrien's son, was a letter involving, in his opinion, a perfect host of bewildering responsibilities. He had scarcely read it through when, with as great an appearance of uneasiness as it was possible for his stolid face to wear, he left his room. Without even answering Monsieur Durand's modest question of what he was to do next, Mr. Brown walked up-stairs to Mrs. Reginald's apartment. The morning was a fine one, and he scarcely hoped to find Mrs. Reginald within. He did not venture to ask himself what he should do if she were out; and Fortune indeed so far favored him that he had no need to do so; Mrs. Reginald had her shawl and bonnet on, but having, luckily for Mr. Brown, mislaid her gloves, she was still within. Nothing was so unusual as for Mr. Brown to come up to her at that hour, and Mrs. Reginald fairly stared at him as he entered her sitting-room, with his pen behind his ear and an open letter in his hand.

"Bad news?" she said, sharply.

"Not good news, at least, Mrs. Reginald, not good news. Before he left, Mr. Dorrien bade me, in case any thing of the kind should occur, apply to you for advice, and if you please I shall do so now."

"If I please, indeed! Did I tell Mr. Dorrien that I would advise in any business of his?—never! Ah! there is my right-hand glove, but where is the left-hand one? Mr. Brown, do you see a brown kid glove anywhere?"

"But, my dear Mrs. Reginald, only consider; this is quite a case for a lady's consideration. The late Mr. George—"

"I know, I know," interrupted Mrs. Reginald, who had found her missing glove, and was walking to the door, "it is about a wife—of course George was not going to leave that mischief out. Of course he married some unfortunate little creature, and ran away from her, the scapegrace! Well, Mr. Brown, other women have been treated so, and have borne it, and she must bear with it too."

"But, my dear Mrs. Reginald," entreated Mr. Brown,

following her down-stairs, for the inexorable lady was going down as fast as she could, "there is not merely a wife, as you shrewdly surmised, but a child."

"Of course!" emphatically cried Mrs. Reginald, her one black eye sparkling—"of course the villain was not going to leave *that* out either. Of course he had a child, and ran away from it."

"I even think he had two children, Mrs. Reginald—I really do. There must be two, Marie and Antony."

Mrs. Reginald stopped, and looking hard at Mr. Brown began reckoning on her fingers.

"Then they must be twins, Mr. Brown," she said—"yes, they must be twins."

"Very likely," replied Mr. Brown; "but, my dear madam, if you will kindly consider—"

"And what have I to consider, Mr. Brown?" interrupted Mrs. Reginald, half stern, half sorrowful. "They have got their mother, and she has them, and I hold her a rich woman, even though she should have to beg her bread and their own—not that I say Mr. Dorrien will allow that—but I say it again, I hold her a rich woman."

"Well, she is not a poor woman, I suppose, for she mentions in her letter that she brings the sum of five thousand francs, which she calls 'mine.'"

"Oh! of course," sarcastically remarked Mrs. Reginald, still going down. "George was not going to make a poor woman of his wife. You don't suppose that, Mr. Brown."

"My dear madam," replied Mr. Brown, looking steadily at Mrs. Reginald, "*is* that lady, or rather was that lady, the late Mr. George's wife?"

"What?"

"I say was that lady the late Mr. George's wife? She signs her name as Antoinette, Comtesse d'Armaillé."

Mrs. Reginald stood still, and asked Mr. Brown, with considerable asperity, "What he meant by coming to her with his cock-and-bull story of twins?"

"But I never said there were twins, Mrs. Reginald," argued Mr. Brown. "I spoke of two children, and I suppose they are the late Mr. George's, for the lady says, 'Marie and Antony kiss papa.' And I also suppose they are the countess's children as well, for in another part of her letter she says, 'My dear Marie and Antony make me

every day a happier mother than ever.' If you will kindly read the letter, Mrs. Reginald, you will understand it all, I am sure."

Mrs. Reginald's black eye sparkled. "Mr. Dorrien did not request me to open and read his letters," she said dryly, "and I will not do so."

"But, my dear madam, it is almost indispensable that you should read the letter. This countess, who writes from Mauritius, expresses her uneasiness at not having heard from her beloved George, declares that she will and must follow him, and informs him that, if she should not find him in Marseilles, she will go on to his father's house in Paris. So that this countess, the children, and several servants—she mentions three—may actually be coming here. And, my dear Mrs. Reginald, mark her words—she expressly says, 'You will scarcely have got my letter before you will see me.'"

Mr. Brown looked uneasily in Mrs. Reginald's face, and Mrs. Reginald fitted on her gloves, buttoned them, and looked hard at Mr. Brown.

"Well, Mr. Brown," she said, coolly, "what will *you* do when that countess comes with her children and her servants and her luggage?"

She spoke with some appearance of interest, as if she really should like to know what Mr. Brown's line of action would be; but Mr. Brown was silent.

"Yes," resumed Mrs. Reginald, nodding at him, "it is an awkward position, and, I say it candidly, Mr. Brown, I should not like to stand in your shoes."

Mr. Brown did not answer this, but, following Mrs. Reginald down-stairs, he made another attempt to soften that obdurate lady.

"I wish I could persuade you to read the letter, Mrs. Reginald," he said—"I really wish I could."

"I dare say you do," was the amused answer.

"Because you have so much good-sense—as Mr. Dorrien says—"

"Good-morning, Mr. Brown," interrupted Mrs. Reginald, composedly. They had reached the bottom of the stairs, and now stood in the hall, at the head of the *perron*. "I wish you well out of it—yes, Mr. Brown, I wish you well out of it."

Mrs. Reginald, as we have said, stood at the head of the *perron;* before her was the court, and beyond the court the vaulted archway and the great gate. That gate was always open in the daytime, and let in a gray glimpse of pavement from the dull street beyond. But some dark body or other—a carriage, thought Mrs. Reginald, who was short-sighted—now obstructed that glimpse.

"Mr. Brown," she said, sharply, "what is that at the gate?"

"I really do not know, Mrs. Reginald," answered Mr. Brown, prudently turning to the door of his private room.

But Mrs. Reginald caught hold of his arm and forcibly held him back.

"Mr. Brown," she said, "you do know—it is a carriage, and it is actually coming in here, Mr. Brown."

"Well, Mrs. Reginald, what about it?" replied the imperturbable Mr. Brown.

"What about it!" exclaimed Mrs. Reginald, stamping her foot on the flag of the hall, and almost giving him a shake in her wrath. "Why, what carriage is it?"

"Perhaps Mr. Dorrien is coming back, Mrs. Reginald, for I see luggage—"

But here Mr. Brown paused. He knew that Mr. Dorrien was certainly not in that railway *omnibus de famille*, which was even then turning into the court, and Mrs. Reginald's one eye, fastened on him with unutterable scorn, warned him not to proceed.

"Well, sir," she remarked, with cutting irony, "why don't you go on? You see luggage, do you also see a lady, children, and servants as well? Because I do, Mr. Brown."

Yes, truly Mrs. Reginald did see all these things, for while she was most unwisely keeping Mr. Brown at bay, and wishing him well out of it, a railway-omnibus, with its roof heaped with luggage, was slowly driving into the court. Short-sighted though she was, Mrs. Reginald did not merely see this vehicle, but she also saw a very little and very young lady in black alighting from it; and after the lady a mulatto girl, with a child; then a nurse with a baby; then another lady, tall and thin, and not very young; then another servant, laden with bags, bandboxes, and um-

brellas; and, last of all, a negro boy in livery, who gravely carried a large doll.

"Eight in all," said Mrs. Reginald, nodding at Mr. Brown, folding her arms, and speaking in her deepest and most emphatic voice. "Eight in all, Mr. Brown."

In the mean while the portress, who had come out of her lodge, looking rather bewildered at this invasion, went up to the little and young lady, and, having exchanged a few words with her, ascended the *perron*, whence Mrs. Reginald had not stirred one inch. She knew that the generalship of this campaign had passed from Mr. Brown to herself. She was too brave to shrink from her duty, and, though she was by no means confident of victory, she was not going to surrender the fortress in her keeping without firing a shot in its defense.

"Madame," said the portress, "this lady, the Countess of Armaillé, asks for Monsieur Dorrien. I have told her that he is not in Paris, but she does not seem to understand."

"Ah!" emphatically said Mrs. Reginald.

The countess was coming up the steps of the *perron*, and Mrs. Reginald could see her well. She was a little, childish-looking creature, with a round, babyish face. The lids of her soft, dark eyes seemed red with crying, and Mrs. Reginald also noticed that the little countess was thinly clad, in garments more suited to summer than to February, and that she appeared to shiver with the cold. Mrs. Reginald's heart relented toward her—it was never a very stern or hard heart—but not Mrs. Reginald's purpose.

"Madam," she said, coming forward to address her, "I understand that you have asked for Mr. Dorrien; he is not in France, I am sorry to say."

"Yes, I know," replied the little lady, with a quivering lip, "but I am his son's widow.—Mélanie," she added, turning to the tall and thin lady, who stood close behind her, "do tell Justine to make haste in with these children, it is so cold." And the poor little lady shivered again.

"Excuse me, I understood that I was addressing the Comtesse d'Armaillé," said Mrs. Reginald, a little sharply.

"Yes, yes," impatiently replied the lady, "I am the Comtesse d'Armaillé, of course; but I was Mr. George Dorrien's wife." Here her lip quivered again.—"Mélanie, shall we have rooms up-stairs or below?"

She had entered the hall, and, turning her heavy, dark eyes to her companion, she addressed her thus, in a languid, appealing tone, the tone of one accustomed to rely upon another for help and guidance. The lady whom she called Mélanie compressed her lips in a way that gave a peculiar, though momentary, expression of power and will to her pale, unexpressive face, and replied, with perfect composure, that the rooms up-stairs would be better for the children.

"Yes, I think so, too," said the little countess. With a sigh she began her ascent; but scarcely had she gone up two steps, when, resting her head on the iron balusters, she burst into tears. She wept very long and very bitterly. When her sobs had ceased, she looked up, and said, wearily, "Tell her, Mélanie."

Whereupon Mélanie, turning to Mrs. Reginald, who stood looking on like one petrified, composedly informed her, in foreign English, that the Comtesse d'Armaillé had learned her husband's death in Marseilles two days ago, and had not yet recovered from the shock. Mrs. Reginald bent her head, as much as to say, "Of course." Her mind was quite made up now, and she knew what she had to do. She allowed the countess, Mélanie, Justine, the children, and even the little negro servant-boy, to continue their ascent, whispered a few words in the ear of Madame Miron, the portress, and, coolly making her way past the strangers, she preceded them, and, opening a door on the first floor, said, "In here, if you please."

The apartment into which Mrs. Reginald thus ushered them was the great, old drawing-room of the Hôtel Dorrien. It had not been used, unless on rare occasions, for some years, and was almost dark till Mrs. Reginald opened the shutters of one of the five tall windows. The light of the dull February morning then stole in upon the curtains, furniture, and chandeliers, all shrouded in gray linen, and showed their ghost-like outlines on a background of shadowy gloom. The air of this dreary apartment felt very chill, and the little countess shivered as she sank into an arm-chair, and said, a little plaintively, "Mélanie, do see about our rooms—I am so tired."

"Excuse me, madam," remarked Mrs. Reginald, very decisively, "but there are no rooms to see to in this house."

The countess half raised herself up, and stared at Mrs. Reginald.

"But, madam," she said, amazed, "I am Mr. Dorrien's daughter-in-law, and the Comtesse d'Armaillé," she added, impressively.

"How Mr. Dorrien's daughter-in-law can be the Comtesse d'Armaillé, is a puzzle to me," dryly said Mrs. Reginald; "but, however that may be—"

"Mélanie," interrupted the countess, raising her handkerchief to her eyes, "do tell the lady."

Mélanie compressed her lips, and said, with emphatic deliberation: "Madame married my brother, the Count of Armaillé, five years ago. She had been a year a widow when she met Monsieur Dorrien; they were married, privately, of course, and that is how madame still bears the name and title of her first husband."

"Excuse me," said Mrs. Reginald, "you are very good to explain all these matters to me; but I was going to observe that, however that may be, I cannot, in Mr. Dorrien's absence, receive you in his house."

It was the countess whom Mrs. Reginald thus addressed, and the countess, withdrawing her handkerchief from her eyes, said, almost sharply, "Are you Mr. Dorrien's wife, madam?"

"No, madam, I am not," was the short answer; "but, while Mr. Dorrien is absent, this house is in my keeping. I am sorry to say that, before he went away, he left no orders concerning his daughter-in-law—perhaps because he was not aware of her existence. I must therefore suggest, madam, that you should repair to the nearest hotel, and there wait until I have communicated with Mr. Dorrien, and learned his pleasure."

The countess heard her, but looked too much surprised to speak. A pale, slight flush rose to the cheek of the late Count d'Armaillé's sister, and, assuming an amazed look, she said: "Are you aware, madam, of what you are doing? Are you aware that the Countess of Armaillé is of a family so ancient that no man in all Mauritius could have aspired to her hand without presumption, my brother excepted, and that, by marrying Mr. Dorrien's son, she committed one of those acts of imprudence which only love can account for?"

"Ah! love, indeed," murmured the little countess—"oh! my poor dear angel!"

"George Dorrien an angel!" mentally ejaculated Mrs. Reginald; but she respected the little countess's grief, and looked hard at the two children. The mulatto girl had seated herself on the sofa; the baby was lying in her arms, and the other child, a pale girl, who had her mother's dark eyes, stood leaning against her nurse, too tired and listless to be amused even by the big doll which the negro lad was dancing up and down before her.

"Let Mademoiselle Marie alone," sharply said the lady who was called Mélanie.—"Madam," she added, turning to Mrs. Reginald, and speaking rather imperatively, "these children are tired, the comtesse is tired, and I confess that I am tired—is it not time that all this should end?"

But of this speech Mrs. Reginald took no notice. She had ascertained that the children were not twins, and that one of them was certainly not George Dorrien's child. For further information, she applied to the countess herself.

"Madam," said she, "I shall write to Mr. Dorrien to-day. May I ask what you wish me to say to him? You are the Comtesse d'Armaillé, the late Mr. George Dorrien's widow, and these children are—"

But the little countess only burst into tears, and looked up at the ignored Mélanie, who, with her color steadily rising, and with her lips compressing more and more, said, in any thing but a placid voice:

"The eldest of these children is my brother's; the younger one is Mr. George Dorrien's."

"A boy?" eagerly said Mrs. Reginald, forgetting to address the countess.

"A girl," shortly answered Mélanie.

Mrs. Reginald's face fell, and the light died out of her one dark eye.

"Ah!" she said. "Well, madam, I shall write to Mr. Dorrien. Is there any particular request you wish me to put to him?"

Mrs. Reginald was addressing the countess again. Before she could reply, Mélanie's long pent-up wrath broke forth.

"Madam," she said, trembling with passion, "the Comtesse d'Armaillé has no requests to address to Monsieur

Dorrien. The Comtesse d'Armaillé came to her father-in-law's house to confer an honor, not to receive any thing at his hands. The comtesse—I mention it because you do not seem to know it—is a rich woman. She has land upon land—"

"And plantations upon plantations," put in the little countess, with a touch of boastful pride.

"Her daughter, Mademoiselle d'Armaillé, is an heiress," resumed the angry Mélanie; "her other daughter, Antoinette," she added, with a touch of contempt, "will be poor comparatively with her sister."

"But I am sure Marie will be kind to little Antony," plaintively said the little countess.

"Of course she will," resumed Mélanie; "they are not equals in birth, but still they are sisters, and—"

"Excuse me," interrupted Mrs. Reginald. "These two poor children look quite worn out; perhaps, though not equals in birth, they will each take a basin of this hot broth," she added, turning toward the man-servant, who came in with a tray, on which two white basins were steaming.

But Mélanie stepped in between the man and the children. She tightened her lips, and looked almost fiercely at Mrs. Reginald.

"Do these children stay here or not?" she asked, imperiously.

Mrs. Reginald turned to the countess and said kindly, "What will you take, madam? You look very cold."

"Oh, I am *so* cold," said the little countess, shivering. "Perhaps some hot coffee—"

Mélanie did not allow her to proceed. Seizing the tray from the servant's hands, she dashed it with its contents on Mr. Dorrien's Turkey carpet; then, going up to the little countess, she seized her arm, and, between her set teeth, she said, "Come!"

The countess rose, looking frightened, but not attempting to resist. Indeed, Mélanie's wrath acted with the awful rapidity of a whirlwind. The man-servant started back in dismay as he saw the broth spreading on the Turkey carpet; the mulatto girl hurried out of the room with a scared face; little Marie, clinging to her skirts, looked back at her aunt with frightened eyes; the nurse, without

even trying to hush the baby, who screamed fearfully, walked off as fast as she could; the negro-boy, still holding the doll, scampered headlong down-stairs; and the servant-girl, picking up her parcels, which she had laid down at the door, looked at Mrs. Reginald, as if expecting attack and retaliation from that lady; but Mrs. Reginald stood perfectly still, watching the retreat of her vanquished foe.

"Come," said Mélanie again, "you do not stay here to be insulted."

"No, I do not stay here to be insulted," said the little countess, nodding with much stateliness at Mrs. Reginald.

But that lady only shook her head at the young creature, and, looking down at her of one side with her bright eye, she only said, "Poor thing!"

"You have not been received as the Comtesse d'Armaillé should be received," said Mélanie, seizing her hand and leading her to the door.

"No," repeated the countess, drawing herself up, "I have not been received as the Comtesse d'Armaillé should be received."

"Poor little thing!" ejaculated Mrs. Reginald, shaking her head again over the little widow.

"And Monsieur Dorrien shall hear of all this," said Mélanie, looking as if she would have liked to do Mrs. Reginald some bodily injury.

"Perhaps, madam, you will kindly favor me with that lady's name," remarked Mrs. Reginald, addressing the comtesse, who now stood on the threshold of the drawing-room. "Mr. Dorrien would like to know who flung the broth on his carpet, I dare say."

The countess did not answer, and hastened on, but her sister-in-law turned on Mrs. Reginald, and said, defiantly:

"My name is Mélanie, and, though I was Count d'Armaillé's sister, I have not and never had any other name. You have put the question because, somehow or other, you knew this; and depend upon it that, if we ever meet again, I shall remember it for you."

She lifted up a threatening forefinger to Mrs. Reginald, who raised her eyebrows in supercilious surprise, and, almost thrusting the little countess down before her, she walked down-stairs. Mrs. Reginald gravely followed, but did not go beyond the head of the *perron;* thence she sur-

veyed the exodus of the invaders. They entered the railway-omnibus in the court; the driver, who had been unloading the baggage, had, to his great disgust, to hoist it up again. Mrs. Reginald looked calmly on, seeming to take a world of interest in the trunks, boxes, and bags, of the little countess. A discreet cough at her elbow made her turn round.

"Oh, you are there, Mr. Brown," said she.

"My dear madam, I have been there all the time," replied Mr. Brown.

"In—deed! Well, I am short-sighted, for I never saw you."

"Well, you see, ladies"—a gentle cough—"ladies are so—so impetuous."

"Nonsense!"

"No—really it is not—really it is not nonsense, Mrs. Reginald; and, indeed, I am in great doubt as to how Mr. Dorrien will feel in this matter. The lady was his son's wife, and the child is his son's child."

Mrs. Reginald measured him from head to foot; then from his toe-tips to his bald crown her one eye traveled again.

"Mr. Brown," she said, austerely, "you are perfectly free to ask that lady, and her sister-in-law, and her children, and her servants, and the negro-boy, and the doll, to remain here till Mr. Dorrien comes back. Only if you do so"—Mr. Brown hastened to protest that he had no such intentions—"only if you do so," continued Mrs. Reginald, ignoring his protest, "it is your doing, not mine."

It is almost needless to say that Mr. Brown had no wish to do any thing of the kind, and that Mr. Dorrien's daughter-in-law, grandchild, and suite, drove out of the court undetained by him. He did, indeed, go up to the door of the omnibus, and civilly ask the comtesse to favor him with her address. This request the intractable Mélanie received with a slam of the door in his face; that made Mr. Brown start back amazed; that filled Mrs. Reginald's stern heart with satisfaction; and that sent Durand and Leroux, peeping from behind the green curtain of the counting-house window, into ecstasies of delight, which had not subsided when Mr. Dorrien's clerk returned to them and to his official duties.

Two days latter Mr. Dorrien came home. He received Mrs. Reginald's account of what had occurred with his usual impassive countenance, merely saying—

"Of course, Mrs. Reginald, I attach no blame to you; but, if I had been at home, my son's widow and her child should not have left my house so."

"And if *I* had been at home," tartly answered Mrs. Reginald, shooting a rather defiant glance with her bright eye at him, "they should have received another welcome than that which I gave them."

Mr. Dorrien waved his hand—it was very delicate and fair, though rather thin—in a graceful, deprecating fashion, and said, in his courteous way, "Of course, of course;" then, leaving Mrs. Reginald—for this conversation took place immediately on his arrival — he repaired to Mr. Brown's private rooms.

"Well, Mr. Brown," he said, as that gentleman rose and they shook hands—Mr. Dorrien did sometimes call him Brown, but it was very rarely indeed that he did so —"well, Mr. Brown, I have seen Mrs. Reginald and heard all about it. It is a pity, but it could not be helped, I suppose. Only, will you be kind enough to make some inquiries about that poor young thing? She came from Mauritius—the consul—we know the consul there, do we not?—a Mr. Sinclair—yes, I am sure his name is Sinclair —well, he will tell us all about her."

Mr. Brown took a note to that effect.

"I also think," said Mr. Dorrien, after a pause, "that, until we have the consul's answer, we will let the matter rest, Mr. Brown. And, now, how have things been going on while I was away?"

But Mr. Brown had nothing of importance or interest to tell his master. Business was dull—when did men of business ever find business otherwise? Nevertheless, two new houses in the provinces wanted to deal with them, but he (Mr. Brown) thought that there was no need to be in a hurry. Had Mr. Brown any objection to them? asked Mr. Dorrien, with sudden interest. Oh! no; but still, Mr. Brown thought there need be no hurry. And so the conversation drifted away from the countess and her child, and returned to them no more.

Mr. Sinclair was written to, and in due course of time

Mr. Sinclair's answer came. The Comtesse d'Armaillé had been Miss O'Donnell, wrote the consul. She was an orphan and an heiress, and had been married at fifteen to the Comte d'Armaillé, who was forty, penniless, and profligate. He beat and ill-used his little wife, who, soon after his death, contracted a private marriage with Mr. Dorrien's son; but how George Dorrien had come to Mauritius, and what he had been doing there, Mr. Sinclair prudently professed not to know. "No good," mentally said Mrs. Reginald, when she came to this portion of the letter.

The birth of her second child compelled the countess to acknowledge her marriage; this acknowledgment, Mr. Sinclair confessed, led to some unpleasantness, and George Dorrien, after a while, determined upon going to Europe. That his young wife soon followed him, Mr. Sinclair knew —also that she had not returned to Mauritius. But there closed the information he could give. Mr. Dorrien made no comment upon any of the particulars thus conveyed to him, but he instructed Mr. Brown to take the needful steps in order to discover the countess's whereabouts.

This, however, proved more difficult than writing to Mr. Sinclair. A young widow with two children, a companion, and several servants, were not, it would seem, very hard to find out; but, somehow or other, Mr. Brown could not do it. He ascertained that the countess had left Paris, and gone to Italy. But, when he had discovered that Sorrento was the place of her residence, he also learned, almost immediately afterward, that she was gone to Germany. From Germany the countess went to Belgium, thence to England, and thence to Belgium back again; and so she seemed to wander about Europe, never staying long enough anywhere for Mr. Dorrien to make any attempt to communicate with her. Once, indeed, when she was wintering in Rome, Mr. Dorrien wrote to her, but his letter was sent back to him by return of post.

"Mr. Brown," quietly said Mr. Dorrien to the clerk, "you will take no more steps in this matter, if you please."

Mr. Brown accordingly troubled himself no more with the wanderings of the countess, and quietly informed Mrs. Reginald that it was really quite a relief to have that matter disposed of.

The relief lasted several years, at the end of which Mr.

Dorrien received two letters. One, edged with black, bore the postmark of Nice; the other came from England. They were evidently not business letters, for Mr. Dorrien said not a word of their contents to Mr. Brown—not, at least, for two days after receiving them. Even then he was silent concerning the letter from Nice, and all he said of the English letter was, "Mr. Brown, you remember John Dorrien?"

Imperturbable though Mr. Brown was, he gave a little start. It was so many years since the name of John Dorrien had been mentioned in that house.

"Yes, sir, I remember Mr. John Dorrien," answered Mr. Brown, after a moment's pause.

"Well, it seems that his widow is living somewhere in or about London, and that John Dorrien's boy has been brought up at Saint-Ives, and is a very clever young fellow."

"I am sure I am very glad to hear it, sir."

"So am I, Mr. Brown."

Two days later Mr. Dorrien said, in the same careless way:

"Oh, by-the-by, Mr. Brown, I have written to Mrs. John Dorrien."

"Indeed, sir!"

"Yes, I wrote this morning."

Mr. Dorrien said no more; Mr. Brown put no questions; but the letter which Mr. Dorrien had written and sent that morning was that which Mrs. Dorrien had placed in John Dorrien's hand.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Dorrien never wasted words, spoken or written. In his letter to Mrs. Dorrien, he now implied, briefly, what it was not convenient to explain at any length. After gliding over the long break in their intercourse as gracefully as if it had lasted sixteen days instead of so many years, he alluded to John Dorrien. He was charmed to learn that he was a young man of promise, and congratulated her kindly; but he ventured to ask of his dear Mrs. Dor-

rien if the place of his father's son, of the last of the Dorriens after himself, was not by his side in the old house? Should a stranger be called in to become his successor, and one who did not bear the old name be held worthy of steering the "Dorrien" on her way down the tide of time? A slight allusion to Mr. Blackmore, also to the size of the Hôtel Dorrien, which would render any domestic arrangement easy, and a request for a prompt reply, concluded Mr. Dorrien's epistle.

John had read this letter in total silence, without one exclamation of surprise, or one comment of approval or blame. He returned it to his mother without uttering a word, but with sorrowful gravity in his face.

So he, John Dorrien, the poor and obscure lad, was the last of those great and rich Dorriens whom Mr. Blackmore had first mentioned to him! He was mortified to find, being of a proud and independent spirit, that he actually thought somewhat more of himself for this connection. Was he not the same John Dorrien who had got up that morning resolved to strive for self-won honors? But this was not all. He felt cut to the heart by his mother's long secrecy, and thoroughly indignant with that rich Mr. Dorrien, who, after putting them by so many years, now coolly took them up again. Mrs. Dorrien sat with the letter in her hand, striving to read the meaning of her son's face. The pale gleam of an English sun was stealing into the room, and lit up the spot on which the boy stood. She saw the gold shining in his brown hair, the pure blood in his clear cheek, but his grave eyes and compressed lips gave her no clew to his feelings.

"John," she said, after what seemed to both a long pause of silence, "I told you so; Mr. Dorrien's letter concerns you, and not me. You will have to give it time and thought and—"

"Little mother," interrupted John, leaving his place to go and sit down by her, "I require little time or thought to answer Mr. Dorrien. I do not know if I ought to feel obliged to him for the position he offers me, but I do not."

And John threw back his head in defiance of Mr. Dorrien, La Maison Dorrien, commerce, and fortune. His mother gave him a wistful look.

"If there be a meaning in language," she said, "Mr.

Dorrien means to leave his business to you; and the firm of Dorrien has always been a great firm, and a rich one."

"What was my father in it?" asked John.

"What Mr. Dorrien is now, John."

She said no more. Her son could see that she said this much with reluctance. How or why his father's position had passed to Mr. George Dorrien was evidently not a pleasant subject to the widowed lady. "That Mr. Dorrien has wronged my father," thought John, his gray eyes flashing, and his secret resolve was strengthened.

"Well, little mother," resumed John, coolly, "I have no taste for the Aladdin's Lamp which Mr. Dorrien, who has forgotten us so long, now offers. I will, God willing, climb my way up my own ladder, and trust me, little mother," he added, passing his arm round her, and looking fondly in her face, "though the rungs of my ladder may not be made of gold—his are, I suppose—they will afford me footing firm and sure, and lead to what shall be very good for us both."

Mrs. Dorrien almost bit her tongue, in order not to make some rejoinder which John might deem unkind. She saw well enough that her docile little boy, her obedient Johnny, had vanished, and that the present John, though tender and devoted, was also very willful, and thoroughly bent on having a will of his own. He did not even make a semblance of consulting her on so momentous a subject as this; he took not the least pains to untie this Gordian knot; he coolly cut through it, and, having done so, seemed to consider the matter disposed of.

"My dear," she said, after a pause, "think of what you are doing. If you reject this position, you may never again have such an opportunity."

"I trust not," quickly replied John. "I mean that I do not wish for the alternative. I do not care for money, little mother, but of course it is a temptation, especially just now; and since I must not yield to it, I would rather not be tempted."

Then it was a temptation. Poor John's honest confession gave his mother sudden hope. Her color rose, her dark eyes, which had grown so dim, got back their old light.

"My dear boy," she said, with a look of surprise, "this

is no temptation to shrink from. What can you see so objectionable in Mr. Dorrien's proposal?"

She put the question; she could ask such a thing; she could forget his great dramatic poem, and the fame and fortune he was to build upon it! John colored violently.

"Why, little mother," he exclaimed, in a tone of reproach, "what have I to do with business? I have not been seven years at Saint-Ives for that. Besides, how could I go on with 'Miriam' if I were at Mr. Dorrien's? I suppose it is a fine position; but the mere thought of working from morning till night for money-making is abhorrent to me. I would not submit to such a yoke in order to become a millionaire."

Mrs. Dorrien smiled with some bitterness. She thought of the life she had led for sixteen years—how she, reared in comfort and wedded to wealth, had been her own servant, how she had worked herself almost blind, and learned to do without the comforts and often the necessaries of life for the sake of the boy who considered her so little, and himself so much. She had done it, and not complained, but had she liked it?

"You will think over it," she said, a little coldly, though with a heightened color.

John shook his head, and almost laughed.

"I have thought over it," he said, "and my mind is made up. I will not sit on a stool in Mr. Dorrien's office, and lead the life he leads. We may not be very rich, little mother, but we shall soon have a comfortable home of our own, I trust. I shall see about 'Miriam' to-day, and the result will show you, I hope, that I have decided wisely."

"John, I believe you are very gifted," Mrs. Dorrien spoke emphatically; "but even great gifts are not acknowledged at once. You may meet with checks which will make you regret having been so hasty with Mr. Dorrien."

If it had not been for her present and pressing needs, Mrs. Dorrien would have let this matter rest, and trusted to time for her ally. Little though she knew of literature, she knew enough of life and its inevitable disappointments to look at it from another point of view than that of sanguine John; but she had not time to wait. Her position was bitter and critical. John could not return to Saint-Ives, to plunge more deeply into this poetic abyss. Indeed,

that he should dream of becoming a real poet, and look to poetry for his bread and her own, was a sort of insanity. She felt angry with his madness, and all the more so that she was in some measure answerable for it. Why had she given him the education of all others most likely to foster literary tastes and faculties? She had done it, and she felt that she could not now undo it too quickly and too surely. Her argument, however, only seemed to make John restive. He was still too much of a boy not to have plenty of combativeness in him. The mere thought of fighting his way up, spite publishers and critics, was delightful to the lad. It would give sweetness to victory to have had a preliminary wrestling. He could not help smiling at the thought; and in the smile his mother read that she had defeated her own object, and must change her tactics.

"Besides," she resumed, gravely, "you must consider Mr. Dorrien's kindness in this, John. Is it not making a poor return for it not even to give his offer the trial, say of six months, or a year, just to see how you would like that sort of life?"

"Consider Mr. Dorrien!" echoed John, amazed and displeased. "Why, mother, I did not like to complain of him, since you did not, but what consideration has he shown for us all these years? Has he remembered us? Has he sought us, or made a serious effort to find us? Then, what consideration do I owe him now?"

Mrs. Dorrien shook her head impatiently.

"Young people do not understand," she said, in a fretful tone. "But you are right in one thing, John: since I do not complain, you should not do so."

"But I do not, little mother; I only prefer my own way to Mr. Dorrien's."

John laughed the short, independent laugh of ever-presumptuous youth. Mrs. Dorrien was silent again, and pondered. What should she say next?—what argument should she use? She might tell John that she wished for this thing, and bid him do it for her sake; and, though the lad might have made another stand for the liberty and the sweetness of his life, he would probably have yielded, for he had a generous nature, and he loved her. But Mrs. Dorrien was proud; she was accustomed to bestow upon John, not to receive from him; she could not bear to hum-

ble herself so far before her son, even though the object she had in view was certainly his welfare, and not her own; moreover, and though she was not an untruthful woman, in the hardest sense of the word, she was not very fond of the straight, open high-road, and preferred little devious paths of her own. She thought them short cuts, but they were very long rounds sometimes, and led her through much bitterness and sorrow to the goal she wished to reach. Mrs. Dorrien liked them, however, and, rather than tell John plainly what she wished him to do, she now inflicted on herself keen and bitter pain.

"John," she said, after a pause, "I believe you see I wish you to accept Mr. Dorrien's proposal."

"I know, mother, that, if you do, it is for my sake," said John, coloring.

"Of course it is for your sake; but I have other reasons of which you know nothing, John, and it is only fair to myself, as well as to Mr. Dorrien, that you should know them. John, have you nothing more to ask about your father?"

"I have no wish to ask what you have no wish to tell," said the youth, gravely.

"And how could I wish to tell that which was so bitter for me to repeat, so hard for you to hear?" she cried, with sudden passion. "I suppose I must tell you now; but, John, listen, and do not question. I will say all that is needful, but I have not fortitude enough to say more. I had a little fortune of my own when I married your father. He had the firm of Dorrien, La Maison Dorrien, as they called it in Paris, and call it still, I dare say. His grandfather willed it to him; but his first-cousin, Mr. George Dorrien, did not thereby lose his share. He was what is called a sleeping partner. He had neither the tastes nor the position of a man of business; he married an heiress, and was to be a country gentleman. O John! it is so hard to say the rest."

John looked wistfully at his mother; tears flowed down her pale cheeks; her lips quivered; her whole being seemed shaken.

"Do not tell me, little mother," he said, generously. "I will take your word for it all."

"No, I must tell," said she. "I have begun, I must go

on. A few words will do. John, your father was very, very unfortunate, more sinned against than sinning; but, before you were a year old, my money was gone, your father's share was gone, and Mr. George Dorrien's share had vanished. The firm of Dorrien, which had lasted a century, must have perished, and been utterly disgraced, but for Mrs. George Dorrien's money. That saved it; but your father, your poor father, John, died by his own hand."

She buried her face in her hands, while John, pale and sorrow-stricken, said not a word.

"I could not bear to tell you," she said, looking up. "I would never have told you, if I could—never have darkened your mind, my poor boy, with so sad a story, if I could have helped it."

"You were wrong, mother," said John, speaking almost sternly, and his very lips were white, "you were wrong. We are all of us willing enough to take the honor that comes to us from our parents—we must also learn how to take the shame."

"But it was not shame!" cried Mrs. Dorrien, her face in a flame. "I told you that your father was more sinned against than sinning. He was involved before he knew how or why, and, in his sensitiveness and over-conscientiousness, he could not bear to see the ruin he had wrought. Mr. George Dorrien, though he suffered so severely, never reproached him; the world never thought your poor father other than unfortunate."

John did not answer, but he was not convinced. He was naturally rigid in his ideas of honor, and, being young, he was severe in his judgments of men. His mother's revelation had given him a terrible shock. The father, whom she had always mentioned as so perfect and accomplished a gentleman, whose mild, refined face now looked down at him from the wall—that father had died by his own hand; and his mother might say what she liked, he had so died because he could not face dishonor. Nothing could, nor ever did, remove that bitter conviction from his soul; but never was it so bitter as in that first hour.

"You must not set yourself up as a judge against your own father," said Mrs. Dorrien, almost angrily. "Mr. Dorrien, who suffered so much through him, never reproached him; and yet, John, he did suffer. He hated business as

much as you do, and he had to yoke himself to it. He had meant to lead a country life, and he had to shut himself up in a great city. Do you wonder that I shrank from him, and purposely let my track be lost? And if he seeks us now, do you wonder that I urge you to please him, and think he has a claim upon you?"

John was silent. He was going through the pangs of a great mental agony. Undeserved shame was bearing him down to the earth. It seemed to him as if his very pride in the name he bore were gone from him—as if he cared no more for fame, for glory, for the honor of beautiful verse; but, keenly though he suffered, he had too generous a nature to let his mother know all his feelings.

"Little mother," he said, sorrowfully, "I do not set myself up as a judge against my own father, nor do I wish to reproach his memory."

"Do not," she said, almost passionately; "never do that, John, however hard the cost of the past may be to you."

He could not misunderstand her meaning. His mother considered him bound by that fatal past to accede to Mr. Dorrien's request. And for once they were agreed; John, though he did not say it, thought so, too. His eyes sought that pale portrait on the wall, and spoke to it in tender, silent language. That erring man was his father, after all, and John Dorrien shrank from none of the claims the name and bond implied. He took up his heavy inheritance, not gladly, but in a stoic spirit. He had once thought that honor would go back through him to his dead father; and so it would, but through another channel than that which he had dreamed of. The late John Dorrien was not to be the father of a great poet, but his son was to take up the load which the broken-hearted man had laid down, and to redeem his tarnished honor. All these thoughts and feelings passed through him as he looked at the portrait, and listened to his mother, but John Dorrien did not speak.

"And now," resumed Mrs. Dorrien, "you know all—I have no more to say—no more to urge. You can think over Mr. Dorrien's proposal, and answer it when you please."

"Mother," asked John, with sorrowful gravity, "what use can I be of to Mr. Dorrien?—what can I do that another would not do as well?"

"You ask it—you can ask it?" she said, clasping her hands, almost indignantly. "Are you not a Dorrien?—do you not bear the old name, and is there not something in a name? And does not Mr. Dorrien know that you have been reared at Saint-Ives—that you have studied there, and always been the first?"

"We did not study commerce," replied John, giving his mother a wistful look; for Virgil, Homer, Tacitus, and Cicero, the sweetness and grandeur of song, the stateliness of history, the beauty of eloquence, came back to him as he spoke, and smote him with their lost splendor and loveliness.

"I think Mr. Dorrien right in wishing for you," emphatically said Mrs. Dorrien; "but, whether he be right or wrong, it is for you to consider these words of his letter: 'Is not the place of his father's son here by my side in the old house?'"

A sharp pang pierced poor John's heart. He was but a boy, after all, and did not know how to defend himself. His mother was too much for him, with that sad story in the past, and that claim of honor in the present. He did not know how to resist her, or how to fight his way out of that net which had so suddenly closed round him; but he found it very hard to yield, and to give up the life he loved, the future he had hoped for, at the word of a stranger.

"Mother," he said, "don't you think that, if I explain to Mr. Dorrien that my tastes and education unfit me for this position—"

"Oh, of course," she bitterly interrupted, "Mr. Dorrien will not urge the point, but I know what he will think."

John bit his lip. That little taunt carried the day. "Very well," he said, "let it be; but it is hard."

He could not prevent his lips from quivering. His mother embraced him fondly, and told him that God would bless and reward him; but, though John repelled neither heavenly blessing nor reward, he could not say to himself that either was his motive for submission. He was obeying a stern voice, keener and more subtile than that of conscience, the voice of Honor. He would have thought it dishonorable in his father's son to act otherwise than as he was now acting. Mr. George Dorrien had taken up a heavy

load sixteen years ago, but John would not shrink now from his share of the burden.

But though John was imaginative, and could rush upon sacrifice with the fond illusions of youth, to whom heroism always seems so easy; though he was gentle-hearted, and could not mistrust where he loved, he was also shrewd, and giving his mother a wistful, perplexed look, he said to her: "Little mother, does not all this seem very strange to you?"

That look, and his evident sorrow, tried Mrs. Dorrien strangely; but she would not give in. With feverish eagerness she completed her triumph by writing off at once to Mr. Dorrien. Her letter was brief, but decisive. She showed it to John, who read and returned it silently. He wished for no reprieve, but he could not help feeling that none was granted to him. Mrs. Dorrien went and posted the letter at once. When she came in, she found Johnny seated at the table, his hand buried in his brown locks, his eyes riveted on the loose pages before him. Yet he was not reading, he was only going back to some happy hours spent out upon the cliffs of the French coast, with the swarthy, ardent, and enthusiastic Mr. Ryan. He was only hearing once more those deep emphatic words, the sweetest that had yet fallen upon his ears, "John, my boy, that is grand," and he was asking himself, with dull and sad wonder, what Mr. Ryan would say. His mother went up to him, and laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"My dear," she said fondly, "it is hard, I know, but you are not the one to do things by halves. Remember Lot's wife; there is temptation and peril in looking back. If you are to become a man of business, you cannot go on with poetry. Take these verses of yours, make them up into a packet, and seal it. When you have won a position, when perhaps you are sole master of the Dorrien firm, you can open this packet again, and indulge yourself to your heart's content."

She expected remonstrance and opposition, but, though John gave a little start as she made this bold proposal, and looked at her with strange earnestness, he did not prevent her from carrying out her purpose. He let her gather up his papers, fold them neatly, and seal them up for him; and he took them thus sealed from her hand, and put them

away silently. But silence is often the gravestone under which some of our saddest thoughts lie buried, and John Dorrien's thought now was, "Surely all this is my mother's doing."

CHAPTER X.

As usual, Mr. Brown had gone up to Mrs. Reginald's sitting-room, and as usual he found that lady warming her toes at the fire, leaning back in her rocking-chair, and holding up a volume so that the light of the lamp on the table near her might fall upon the page; and though Mrs. Reginald was not handsome, she made a very pleasant, warm, and comfortable picture as she sat thus.

Mrs. Reginald was not merely a great reader, but finding life dull at Hôtel Dorrien, and not being one to rely upon others for amusement, she turned to books. She chose them both grave and gay. She had, as she said herself, a healthy appetite, and could digest good food of any kind. She liked Dickens, she liked Shakespeare, she liked history, science in a light way, metaphysics when they agreed with her own views, and the last novel when it was a good one. In short, Mrs. Reginald had a vigorous mind, and did not let it rust. When Mr. Brown, taking a chair and softly rubbing his hands before Mrs. Reginald's cheerful fire, now remarked that she was reading, he meant it as the statement of a fact, not as a question, for he was accustomed to find her so engaged; but Mrs. Reginald's one eye was down upon him directly.

"Ah! you want to know what I am reading," said she. "Where is the use? You never read novels or fiction of any kind. Did you ever read fairy tales, Mr. Brown, when you were a little boy in a round jacket? But were you ever a little boy? Of course not; and of course there never were any fairies for you. But I am Irish, and the fairies and I are first-cousins. I always liked them, pretty little midges, skipping about in the moonlight. And I still like fairy tales, Mr. Brown; for they all come straight from Fairy-land—which is a very delightful country."

Mr. Brown coughed discreetly. Mrs. Reginald was a superior woman, and, because she was so, had flights of fancy.

"What sort of a place do you think it is, Mr. Brown?" said she, not considering his cough as an answer, and turning her bright eye upon him, as if expectant of one.

"I think that is Mr. Dorrien," replied Mr. Brown, *sotto voce*.

And Mr. Dorrien it was who now entered the room; Mr. Dorrien, graceful, courteous, languid, and refined, as usual, but Mr. Dorrien far more than usually communicative and pleasant. Taking a chair between the two (they sat on opposite sides of the fire), Mr. Dorrien told them all he had been doing that day; how he and Mr. Plummer had made two ineffectual attempts to meet, and had not accomplished their object; and also how he, Mr. Dorrien, had been to the Hôtel-de-Ville on business, and had been more than usually disgusted with the arbitrary insolence of the man in office there. Then followed a remark on the weather, which was cold; then another on Mrs. Reginald's looks—which were the looks of health, he averred; then, gliding gracefully as ever into the subject which had brought him to Mrs. Reginald's sitting-room, he said, quietly:

"By-the-by, my dear madam, Mrs. John Dorrien and her son will be coming here shortly. I can trust their rooms to you, I am sure. By their rooms I mean a portion of this large house—a limited one, of course—to be set apart for their use. They do not come as visitors, but as permanent residents."

Profound silence followed this announcement. Mrs. John Dorrien and her son! Mrs. Reginald remembered him a baby in his widowed mother's arms, and mentally calculated his age; but she asked aloud if the rooms on this floor would do. Mr. Dorrien assured her they were the very thing, and, turning to Mr. Brown, he said, with studied carelessness:

"We are going to have an assistant, Mr. Brown. I thought it well to secure this young John Dorrien. He is a lad of promise, and he has the name and youth which we both want, Mr. Brown," added Mr. Dorrien, with a rather dreary smile.

"Is he not very young, sir?" asked Mr. Brown.

"Twenty or so, I believe."

"He is seventeen," positively said Mrs. Reginald.

"Well, then, he will be twenty three years hence," laughed Mr. Dorrien.

Mr. Brown looked grave.

"I suppose he comes to learn business?" he remarked.

"He comes to learn this business," said Mr. Dorrien, almost sharply; "he comes to work here—to help us, and to bear his share of the load."

"He is very young," said Mr. Brown, stroking his chin and looking at his master.

He has the name of Dorrien, Mr. Brown—that will do for nine out of ten; he is clever—the first at Saint-Ives."

"They learn Greek and Latin there, sir," persisted Mr. Brown, evidently not favorably impressed by the prospect of having a youthful scholar from Saint-Ives in the counting-house of La Maison Dorrien.

"They learn mathematics, too, and algebra, and twenty things besides, which open a young man's mind to the practical side of life. At all events," added Mr. Dorrien, "we can give the lad a trial."

Mr. Brown raised no further objection. He looked stolidly at the fire; and Mrs. Reginald, turning her brown eye first on him, then on Mr. Dorrien, drew her own conclusions on what she had just heard. She was both amazed and perplexed. Clerks of seventeen were surely abundant enough in Paris and London that John Dorrien should be left where he was, as he had been left these sixteen years. What, then, did Mr. Dorrien want him for, that he brought his mother to the house in order to secure him? He had the name, but why should Mr. Dorrien require a boy's name? Mr. Brown did not like the plan; and his master, foreseeing that he would not like it, had chosen to tell him nothing about it till the matter was decided beyond recall. And he had come this evening to Mrs. Reginald's sitting-room to tell him, in order that her presence might stifle, if it could not silence, the confidential clerk's opposition.

"He has always been a willful man, in his quiet way," thought Mrs. Reginald, looking shrewdly at Mr. Dorrien's pale, languid face, "and a selfish man in his own civil way, and so he will be to the last."

"Perhaps the rooms on the ground-floor would do bet-

ter than those up here?" she suggested aloud, as if the rooms had been the subject of her silent meditations.

"No, not the rooms on the ground-floor," said Mr. Dorrien, quietly, but with perfect decision.

"They are very good rooms, Mr. Dorrien, and quite useless," persisted Mrs. Reginald.

"Mrs. John Dorrien will be better up here," coldly answered Mr. Dorrien, and, like Mr. Brown, Mrs. Reginald had nothing to do but to submit. Having settled this matter, Mr. Dorrien looked at his watch, exclaimed at the lateness of the hour, and, rising, he bade both Mrs. Reginald and Mr. Brown a good-evening.

"Well, Mr. Brown," said the lady, rushing impetuously into the subject as soon as the door had closed upon him, "are you knocked down, prostrate, on your back?—because I am! Mrs. Dorrien here! And Mr. Dorrien talking of a boy of seventeen as if he really wanted him; and then these rooms on the ground-floor! What is he keeping them up for? Mr. Brown, can you make it out?"

"I was not prepared for it," remarked Mr. Brown, ever close and cautious. "I was not prepared for it, Mrs. Reginald."

"You were not prepared for it! Nonsense! What do you think of it? Nothing, of course! Do you ever think, Mr. Brown?" added the vehement lady. "Shall I tell you what I think?" She paused. Mr. Brown looked up expectant. "Mr. Brown," resumed Mrs. Reginald, sarcastically, "I shall do as you do—I shall keep my thought to myself; but mark my words, Mr. Dorrien thinks himself very clever and very keen, but no good will come of it—no good will come of it."

Mr. Brown looked at the fire and rubbed his hands, and shunned the look of Mrs. Reginald's keen bright eye. But it was the misfortune of that lady that she could rarely keep her own counsel, or adhere to her wisest resolves. It was impossible for her to withhold from Mr. Brown that information which he most probably did not require, but which would at least convince him that she, Mrs. Reginald, was too acute to be imposed upon.

"Mr. Brown," she resumed, "do you hear me?"

"Yes, Mrs. Reginald, I am attending."

"Do you remember that passage in the history of De-

cebalus, King of the Daci—but, no, of course you do not. You never read, Mr. Brown?"

"I read the newspaper, Mrs. Reginald."

"Well, then, this Decebalus, who could at one time of his history ask Trajan to pay him tribute, and who, vanquished by that same Trajan, had to die by his own hand—this same king, I say, had some ups and downs in his life. Once he got into a fix. He was hard pushed by the Romans. They were coming on, on, on, Mr. Brown, with their legions in the van, their auguries, too, and their engineers, and architects, and hungry Roman citizens, panting for barbarian land, in the rear. They were coming on, I say, and the German tribes were not all friendly to this Danubian king. He had buried his treasure in the bed of the river, and murdered the slaves who had hidden it there; but, somehow or other, a voice went forth, even among his own people, that the Romans had forced, or would force, the iron gates, and that Decebalus was ended. Now, shall I tell you what I think he did, Mr. Brown? Well, I think he hunted out for some little Decebalus or other, and proclaimed him his successor in the face of the Daci. Whether he had him raised and borne aloft on a shield, Frankish fashion, is more than I can tell you; but one thing I am sure of, that he did it to blind his people. 'What,' says Decebalus, 'you think the Romans are pushing me close, do you? You think I have buried my treasures, and am preparing for death, or flight! You think that a little more, and I shall be a dethroned sovereign! *You never were more mistaken!* Why, my kingdom is so sure a thing that, in my anxiety for it, and for my people, I have actually chosen this boy my successor. Would I choose a successor if I had nothing to bequeath?—and would I hit upon a boy if there were danger coming on? Bless you, I never sat better in my saddle than I do this day.' Now, Mr. Brown, Decebalus may say what he pleases, but such Daci as you and I know better than to believe him. We know that Decebalus never thought of any one save Number One; that he would not have given a farthing for that poor little Decebalus to be alive or dead, and that Dacia and the Daci might all go to perdition, so far as *he* cared. I say *we* know it. And now, Mr. Brown," added Mrs. Reginald, tapping Mr. Brown on the waistcoat, and fixing

him with her one bright eye, "what do you think of my parable?"

Mr. Brown coughed. He thought that Mrs. Reginald was a very acute, but also a very dangerous woman.

"As to what became of the young Decebalus," resumed Mrs. Reginald, "whether he followed the triumphal car of Trajan, or was murdered by the Daci, let us not inquire. Decebalus did not care—of that we may be sure, poor boy, poor boy!" And, folding her arms across her heart, Mrs. Reginald nodded sadly over the fate of this imaginary Decebalus junior.

Mr. Brown began to feel alarmed.

"My dear madam," said he, almost anxiously, "I hope—I trust—I mean that you do not make such remarks, such comments, indiscriminately, you know?"

Mrs. Reginald looked offended, and tartly informed Mr. Brown that she had reached years of discretion.

"My dear madam, I never doubted it. I only feared lest people might take these little flights of fancy for actual facts—facts, you know. Now let me tell you, quite between ourselves, that Mr. Dorrien's business was never more flourishing, more extensive, than it is now."

"My dear Mr. Brown," exclaimed Mrs. Reginald, with sarcastic emphasis, "did I ever doubt it?"

They looked hard at each other; then Mr. Brown, too, discovered that it was late, and, bidding Mrs. Reginald a good-evening, took his leave.

"As if I did not know," said Mrs. Reginald to herself. "Poor boy! I would not have given up mine, not I; but that Mrs. John Dorrien was always a foolish woman—a foolish woman," said Mrs. Reginald, who, spite of some passages in her own life, thought herself a wise one.

A week later Mr. Dorrien drove in his carriage to the station of the *chemin de fer du Nord*, and brought home John Dorrien and his mother. As they passed under the arched gate-way, and entered the old court-yard, he alighted first, and said, with a smile, "You are welcome."

The afternoon was calm and golden. There was sun above the old house, and cool shade in the court. The tall chimney-stacks of the high roof rose on the blue sky, where a few last swallows were wheeling with shrill cries, as if rejoicing that they were departing for the south. All else

was silent, and the quaint, tranquil look of the place, a look of gray age without decay, impressed John Dorrien with the pathetic beauty which clings around the old homes of man. And John knew that this home, if it had not been reared by men of Dorrien blood, had yet sheltered his forefathers for several generations. It had been their refuge in days of storm, their fortress during war-time, and once or twice the field on which the battle of life or death had to be fought by them. In that battle, John Dorrien's father had been worsted. To that house the conquered man had been brought back cold and lifeless. These steps which she now went up, leaning on the arm of her son, the sorrowing widow had descended with her orphan baby in her arms, her eyes dimmed with weeping, her head bowed with humiliation; and this boy, the last of the Dorriens, was to take the family standard in his turn, and carry it in the heat of battle, and fight for its honor, as others had fought before him. There was pride to both in the thought. Mrs. Dorrien walked up the steps of the *perron* with the look of one who takes possession; and the deep, gray eyes of her son sparkled as he sprang up by her side. The sacrifice had been a bitter one, but it was over, or John thought that it was. He felt ready to look at his new life with all the fervid illusions of youth, and to survey with family pride the birthplace to which he was now returning. As they entered the hall, and Mr. Brown and Mrs. Reginald both came to meet them, John thought more of a green glimpse of the garden, which he caught through an open door, than of their welcome; but the sight of these two, of the old clerk whom she had known in her brief prosperity, of the relative whom she had first met in the early hours of her sorrow, was too much for the fortitude of Mrs. Dorrien. Mr. Dorrien saw her pale features work; he felt the coming of a scene, and he hastened to avert the calamity.

"My dear Mrs. Reginald," he said, with his fluent courtesy, "will you kindly show Mrs. John Dorrien to her room? I can see the journey has been too much for her.—Mr. Brown, my young cousin is casting longing eyes at your premises. I am sure he will not be happy unless he sees them by daylight."

Having thus civilly disposed of his two relatives, Mr

Dorrien, much relieved at being rid of them, repaired to his own sanctum, and there read quietly till the dinner-bell rang.

So long as Mr. Dorrien was by, Mrs. Dorrien succeeded in maintaining a sort of composure; but when, escorted by Mrs. Reginald only, she entered the rooms that had been prepared for her, she gave way, and, hiding her face in her hands, yielded to the bitterness of her sorrow. It was natural, and Mrs. Reginald thought and said so.

"But then, my dear," she added, resting her hand on Mrs. Dorrien's shoulder as she spoke, "you have your boy, and he seems a nice young fellow—yes, he really does."

She spoke kindly, but it is a mistake to suppose that people always like kindness; some resent it as another form of patronage, and of these Mrs. Dorrien was inclined te be one. It seemed so bitter to enter this old house again, and to be a guest, not mistress; to be received and shown to these rooms on the second floor by Mrs. Reginald, whom she had never liked, instead of choosing rooms according to her own taste; and Mrs. Reginald did not lessen the hardship by praising her son, John, Mr. Dorrien's heir-apparent, in that tone.

"My son is all that I can wish him to be," she said, raising her bowed head and checking her tears; "all that Mr. Dorrien can even expect from him in the position to which he has called him."

Mrs Reginald withdrew her hand.

"I hope the rooms are to your liking, Mrs. John?" she said, dryly.

"Oh! they are very well, thank you," languidly replied Mrs. Dorrien, who did not like being called Mrs. John; "but who occupies the rooms on the ground-floor now?"

"No one."

"If it makes no difference to Mr. Dorrien, I should prefer them to these," continued Mrs. Dorien, in the same languid manner.

"Mr. Dorrien himself appointed these for you, Mrs. John."

"He is very kind," said Mrs. Dorrien; "but I know—and it is an unspeakable comfort to me to know it, Mrs. Reginald—that my dear boy will more than fulfill his expectations."

Mrs. Reginald put her head to one side and looked curiously at the widow with her one bright eye. It entertained and saddened her to see this foolish mother either laboring under this infatuation, or, if not herself deceived, trying, at least, to deceive others. "Surely this Mrs. John knew 'our Mr. Dorrien,' if any one did. And surely, knowing him, she could not be quite blind!" So reasoned Mrs. Reginald within her own mind—and not wrongly.

Mrs. Dorrien did know her late husband's cousin very well—so well that she had never applied to him through all her troubles. He was not hard, he was not unkind, but no one who knew Mr. Dorrien could expect much from him, or would care to ask him for aid. It was only the strong pressure of necessity, and especially the dangerous influence of "Miriam the Jewess," that had enlisted Mrs. Dorrien on his side against the dearest wishes of her son. If she had only had a little money, if John had not taken that perilous liking to blank verse, she would never have become a dependent, never have returned to this house. Moreover, she was not without some uneasiness—who could tell how it would all turn out? But she could not bear adding the bitterness of fear to the bitterness of memory, and she tried to blind herself a little, and others a good deal, and especially did she attempt riding the high horse over Mrs. Reginald, and assuming the tone and manner of mother to the Dorrien heir-apparent. Unfortunately for this wish of John's mother, Mrs. Reginald's mental vision was of the keenest order, and she was one whom assumption rarely deceived. She ignored Mrs. Dorrien's condescension, spoke no more of John, and simply said that Mr. Dorrien dined at seven. Mrs. Dorrien sighed, and did not think she should be able to appear at the dinner-table for this first evening. Mrs. Reginald, without pressing or remonstrance, promised to send her in some dinner, and so left her.

Mrs. Dorrien glanced around her sitting-room with a dissatisfied air—she did not like its aspect. The court indeed!—what did she want to overlook the court for? Her bedroom and John's rooms were equally distasteful to her. They were too confined and low, to begin with—besides, Mrs. Dorrien was resolved to have the rooms on the ground-floor; they were lofty and spacious, and they

opened on the garden; and, above all, Mrs. Dorrien liked them; she would mention the subject to Mr. Dorrien at dinner—for that he would send some message pressing her to go down, Mrs. Dorrien did not doubt; and in that belief she dressed herself leisurely, having kindly resolved to be persuaded below by Mr. Dorrien's entreaties.

But the dinner-bell rang, and no message came. John, indeed, rushed in to dress, and breathlessly lamented his mother's headache, of which he had heard through Mrs. Reginald. But he took her non-appearance for granted, and, promising to come back as soon as he could, he rushed off again with the desperate hurry and inexorable punctuality of a very young man.

Mrs. Dorrien felt vexed with John for making no effort to change her resolve, and for going down with that gay, airy look. Poor John! he could not help it. He had found it hard to give up his own way, but the thing was done, and he was too young, too buoyant and unselfish, to brood over his hardship. Besides, though his mother had sealed up "Miriam," he knew her by heart; and though he would have nothing to do with her in the daytime, could he not sit up with her at night, and would there not be a secret charm and sweetness in those stolen interviews? This was comfort, for one thing; but apart from this, was he not in Paris? Was not the city of the world before him, and had not Mr. Dorrien dropped a kind hint about not meaning to tie him down to work till he had had Paris out? And then the novelty of it all! That solemn, most amusing Mr. Brown!—that delightful Mrs. Reginald!—that peculiar, interesting Mr. Dorrien, with his pale look and languid ways; and that quaint, ancient house, in which he, John Dorrien, was actually born! Were not all these before him, as it were, to study and make much of? But deeper than these feelings lay one of which he said nothing to his mother—the feeling that by his sacrifice he had insured her comfort—that if he had to work hard, she who had so long worked hard for him might now take her well-earned rest. The thought made his young heart beat, filled it with a gladness which overflowed, and appeared in his sparkling gray eyes and happy voice. He was very sorry that his mother's head ached, but he was not alarmed about it, and gladness remained his prevailing feeling.

The outward signs of this rejoicing were all his mother saw, and she chafed to find that John Dorrien accepted his position so cheerfully. As she took her solitary dinner, and, when it was over, looked at the wood-fire burning with a mild glow on the hearth, Mrs. Dorrien wondered at the ingratitude of young people, and that John did not seem to understand the sacrifice she had made in coming for his sake to Mr. Dorrien's house. And when John came back to her, his account of the dinner did not mend matters. At first she brightened to see him, and her brow cleared, and her poor dim eyes lit at the aspect of her darling.

"How well you look, John!" she said—"not at all tired."

"Nor am I, little mother. You, too, look better. What a pleasant sitting-room this is! May I look at your bedroom? Why, I declare, little mother," said John, coming back to her with a beaming face, "your room is fit for a queen. Much handsomer than any of the rooms at Mr. Blackmore's. By-the-by, I wonder why Oliver has dropped me all at once, don't you? It is strange, is it not?"

Mrs. Dorrien colored as she met the look of his honest eyes, for it was she who had begged of Mr. Blackmore to keep his son and John apart, "till it was all over."

"Tell me all about the dinner, dear," she said, hastily.

"Well, little mother," said John, standing by the fireplace, and thence looking down at her, "every one was so sorry that you could not come down to dinner; but Mrs. Reginald said you were much too poorly to think of it."

"Mrs. Reginald is too kind," dryly said Mrs. Dorrien.

"And I am in love with Mrs. Reginald, mother," resumed John, laughing mischievously. "Well, now, is she not glorious? She is so clever, so original, and so amusing. I shall enjoy her exceedingly, so shall I Mr. Brown. I am to be in his hands, you know, and to learn all the mysteries of envelopes and note-paper from him. What a wonderful business this seems to be!" added John, with sudden thoughtfulness. "Why, there is letter-paper here for all Europe, I do believe."

"It is a great house," replied Mrs. Dorrien, proudly.

"I saw the garden, too, and the statue of the old river-god, and I remembered what you told me, little mother. It all seems like a dream."

"What did Mr. Dorrien say?"

"Not much. He does not talk much, I fancy, but he seems willing to be kind. I am to study two hours a day, and work after that with Mr. Brown. If I have a gift for languages, I am to learn Russian! The library—a large one, it seems—is to be placed at my command, and I am to see Paris, and begin to-morrow. Sha'n't we go about together, little mother? Mr. Dorrien is fond of music, and will take me to the Italian Opera, I think he said to-morrow night. And only think, little mother," added John, laughing, "you are to be Mrs. John—Mr. Dorrien said so."

Mrs. Dorrien, who had heard him with more and more impatience as he rattled on, here closed her eyes with so expressive a look of weariness that John asked with concern if her headache was worse. "Much worse," shortly answered his mother; whereupon he thought it best to leave her, and at once went to his own room. It was a plain room enough, but John admired it exceedingly. He felt excited, pleased, and happy. Business was all at once invested with a roseate hue, and the life before him lost its anticipated gloom. It was early yet; Mr. Dorrien had gone to the French opera, and John opened his portmanteau, took out some paper, and passing his fingers through the thick curls that clustered round his handsome white brow, he sat down to "Miriam the Jewess." What he said to her, and what she answered him, we need not record here. It was twelve when they parted, and John only fell asleep to dream of her as she stood on the mountain looking with her dark eyes at the rising sun.

CHAPTER XI.

THE days that followed this first day were to John Dorrien days of enchantment. His mother did not go about with him, as he had hoped she would—to do so would have revived too many bitter recollections of her early married life; but, though he did his sight-seeing alone, he could not help enjoying it to the heart's core. There is no real

loneliness for the young, when they have good spirits and good health, and John had both in plenty. His frame was light and active, his temper was happy and hopeful. He had inherited more than his handsome Irish eyes from his great-grandmother. He was capable of great sorrows, for his feelings were keen, but it was not in his nature to fret or to repine, or to put by a present joy because there might be trouble in store. Paris, the wonderful city, threw her spell upon him, and John was too eager, too young, and too imaginative, to resist the siren when she came to him clothed either in the dim glories of the past, or in the gay splendor of the present. The weather, too, was lovely, as it almost always is in early October. The sky was clear and blue, the sun was genial, and the air was so light that it made one glad to live. John rushed about from one end of Paris to the other, finding strange contrasts without seeking them. One early morning, he lingered about the Temple Gardens, where the Temple Tower of tragic memory once stood; and while children laughed and played around him, his heart thrilled with pity at the vision of a sad-eyed, stately Marie Antoinette, looking down at him from behind prison-bars. An hour later, he was sauntering along the shaded alleys of the Bois de Boulogue, watching a gay cavalcade. The ladies were all young and lovely, or at least John thought them so, just as their horses seemed to him the most beautiful in the world; and as they rode swiftly past him, their fresh faces, flowing hair, and fleet motion, charmed the boy's poetic fancy. But time is precious to sight-seers, and John made the most of his. After modern loveliness came classic beauty. The cool green wood, with its lake and its water-fall, was quickly forsaken for the Salle des Antiques in the Louvre. There, faithless to his dark-eyed Miriam, John fell helplessly, hopelessly in love: firstly, with that haughty Diana *à la biche*, whose right hand draws an arrow from her quiver, and whose left rests so firmly on the head of a captive stag; secondly, with Polymnia, all meditation and poetic grace; thirdly, with two Roman empresses stately as goddesses, and well-nigh as fair; and, fourthly and lastly, with the Venus of Milo. How John loved the gracious majesty of her attitude, the sweetness of her beautiful face, the waves of her hair parted back from her classic brow, and how he raved about her to

his mother when he got home, until Mr. Dorrien took him to the opera, where a great singer, then in the meridian of her fame, ravished him to the seventh heavens! And then the pictures the next day, the old Italian masters, so dark, and so rich and holy; the quaint Dutch painters, the classic Poussins, the historic portraits, the drawings, and indeed the every thing. No wonder that John Dorrien felt in a fever, that the night seemed too long, and the days too short for his ardor. Before the week was out, John knew Notre-Dame better than he knew the parish church of Saint-Ives. He had visited every other church worth seeing, discovered every spot made significant by great events in history, become familiar with public gardens, palaces, and promenades, seen Versailles and Saint-Cloud; by that time too, it must be confessed, he was rather tired.

"I am afraid you have been overdoing it, John," said Mr. Dorrien, one morning, with his languid smile. "You will be fatigued to-night."

"Oh! no, sir," eagerly replied John, blushing, however, as he remembered that he meant to go and have another look at the Venus that afternoon.

"Ah! well, we shall see," said Mr. Dorrien, carelessly.

Mr. Dorrien was giving a dinner, and that was what he meant by saying that John would be fatigued that evening. There were to be only eight people present in all, Mr. Dorrien's own family and Mr. Brown included; yet this dinner, as Mrs. Dorrien could see, was a grave, serious, solemn business dinner. The three strangers were to be Mr. Plummer, an Englishman, and a Monsieur and Madame Basnage, both French. The preparations made for these three people were on so costly a scale that Mrs. Dorrien's curiosity could not be restrained, and little though she and Mrs. Reginald sympathized, she actually invaded that lady's privacy in the afternoon, to obtain needful information.

Now, Mrs. Reginald was tired, she had been out the whole morning ordering in every thing that money could get, and especially every thing out of season. She had had to make frantic efforts in order to secure green peas to her liking, and had given their weight in gold—as she said, but then she liked figures of speech—for Mr. Dorrien's favorite strawberries. So Mrs. Reginald was tired and put out, and had just reclined back in her easy-chair, and thrown

her handkerchief over her face, when Mrs. John's knock at her door disturbed her. Mrs. Reginald uttered a resigned "Come in," but her aspect was not gracious, and her welcome was formal.

"I am in such perplexity," exclaimed Mrs. Dorrien, sinking down on a chair, and looking at Mrs. Reginald, who sat up straight and stiff. "This dinner, I see, is quite a grand affair, and I really have nothing to wear."

Mrs. Reginald was a woman, and could sympathize with Mrs. Dorrien in this, but she could suggest no remedy. She looked grave and shook her head.

"I almost think I had better not appear," continued Mrs. Dorrien. "Who are these people, Mrs. Reginald?"

"Business connections of Mr. Dorrien's. Mr. Plummer I know. I never saw the other two."

"Well, but who are they?" persisted Mrs. Dorrien.

"Mr. Plummer has been twenty years in France. He has something to do with Mr. Dorrien's Russian connection, I believe; as to the other one, he is a great man down in Angoulême, and that is one of the great places for the manufacturing of paper, as you know, Mrs. John. I fancy that he and Mr. Dorrien are going to have some dealings together; and that is all that *I* know, Mrs. John."

This was said pointedly, so as to show Mrs. John how she, Mrs. Reginald, saw very well that to ascertain the quality of the guests, and not to consult her on the difficulties of her toilet, had been Mrs. John's object in coming. John's mother saw that she could extract no more from Mrs. Reginald, and after again lamenting to that lady the deficiencies of her wardrobe, a lament which the other now heard with supreme indifference, she left her. Mrs. Dorrien was really annoyed at having to appear before strangers at a disadvantage, but she never seriously intended to remain in her room, and thereby abdicate. Accordingly, when the time came, she donned her old black-silk dress, and tried to persuade herself that the cape of imitation black lace, which covered her neck and shoulders, on the plea of delicate health, would do very well as a substitute for ornament, even as her jet ear-rings and bracelets would imply a sort of mourning. John, who knew nothing about dress, and who always thought his mother charming, praised her appearance.

"How nice you look, little mother!" he said, first surveying her from head to foot, then walking round her.

"My dear boy, no one could look nice with so shabby an old thing as this is."

"You mean your dress! Oh! little mother, what need you care about that, with such a figure as you have? I was at the Louvre this afternoon, and I assure you that you have quite the look of the Empress Livia, the wife of Augustus, you know."

"You silly boy," said Mrs. Dorrien, smiling fondly at him, "how can you talk such nonsense to your old mother?"

"But you are not old," exclaimed John, looking nettled, "you are quite young still."

"Hush!" interrupted his mother, kissing him. "I care about neither dress nor age, my dear, if I can but see you in your proper position. And now do get ready, for you have been flirting with Livia, or some other divinity, till you are late."

"Oh! I hope not," cried John, looking alarmed, for there was not much of the modern generation about him, and to be late for Mr. Dorrien's dinner would have been a calamity in his eyes. That misfortune did not come to pass. The whole family were gathered in Mr. Dorrien's drawing-room a full half-hour before the guests arrived. For the first time the splendors of that apartment were revealed to John. The lofty frescoed ceiling, the gloomy old furniture, the old-fashioned mirrors, tall and narrow, impressed him, not as beautiful, but as ancient, ancestral, and venerable in their tarnished splendor, tokens of wealthy ease enjoyed by the men and women who had bequeathed to him his blood and name. It seemed made for that languid Mr. Dorrien, leaning back in his deep and dark arm-chair; for Mr. Brown, sitting straight on his, with business written on his tall yellow forehead and imperturbable face; for the stiff figure of Mrs. Reginald, clad in silk as stiff as herself; and for his pale and still elegant mother, with her look of decayed gentility. "It is a family picture by one of the old Dutch masters," thought John, looking round him with that quick sense and keen appreciation of the picturesque which was to be one of his chief enjoyments throughout life. That feeling of the fitness of things by no means struck John's mother; and even had she been aware of it,

she would not have appreciated her share of the family picture. It was hard when the guests arrived to go down to a stately old dining-room, and see the Dorrien plate, and the old Sèvres, with the Dorrien crest upon it, and feel at a disadvantage. It was very hard to sit down at Mr. Dorrien's luxurious table, with Madame Basnage, a florid dame, in amber satin and diamonds, and harder still to see Mrs. Reginald in stiff black moiré and velvet, "so plain, but so good," as Mrs. Dorrien could not help remarking regretfully. But then there was compensation. Mrs. Dorrien was John's mother, and it was impossible for Mrs. Dorrien not to see that John, though silent, modest, and observant, played an important part at Mr. Dorrien's dinner. Mr. Dorrien, indeed, scarcely spoke to or looked at the young man, but he referred to him casually, carelessly, and significantly, as his relative and successor. Charles V., wearied with the cares of empire, could not have alluded otherwise to a young Philip II. Mr. Dorrien did not imply that he was going to abdicate, but he gave it to be understood that he wished to have a Dorrien at hand whenever he was inclined to do so. Mr. Dorrien, indeed, almost overdid John's Dorrienism, and even bestowed some superfluous regard on Mrs. Dorrien. Her silk dress might be poor, her lace cape imitation, and her jet ornaments contemptible—she was a Dorrien, the mother of the future Dorrien, and he treated her with the most scrupulous and formal politeness. What about her poverty? He, Mr. Dorrien, was rich, and the poverty or wealth of his relatives was nothing to him—perhaps, indeed, it was all the better that the mother of his heir should appear in such humble attire, and convince Monsieur Basnage, or any one else, how independent of other money save his own was the present head of the old firm of Dorrien. Something of this Mrs. Dorrien felt, and it was half bitter, and half pleasant; but, to do her justice, the joy and pride of being John's mother were the strongest feelings of all. Her own position, and especially her son's, occupied her more during the progress of the meal, which was rather formal and silent, than Mr. Dorrien's guests. They were not very interesting. Mr. Plummer was long, lean, and taciturn. He kept his little eyes half shut, and enjoyed Mr. Dorrien's good things with an occasional licking and smacking of his lips, which was more

expressive of satisfaction than indicative of refinement. Mrs. Reginald shot at him on those occasions a look very like one of disgust; but Mr. Plummer's lids veiled the orbs beneath them, and he was happily unconscious of the displeasure of the lady of the house. Monsieur and Madame Basnage behaved very differently—they were much alike in person and manner, and were, indeed, not merely husband and wife, but near relations. Both were stout and florid, and looked good-natured; both were not merely ignorant and unrefined, but decidedly vulgar; and both enjoyed Mr. Dorrien's luxurious dinner, and praised it to each other with a want of tact and good-breeding rare in the French, where these qualities are not so often as elsewhere the exclusive attributes of the well-born and well-educated. But this was not all; Monsieur and Madame Basnage were obstreperous and overbearing—they laughed at each other's jokes, they dogmatized over their own assertions, and they contradicted right and left, Mrs. Reginald especially.

For once, however, that lady's tongue was under special control. Mr. Dorrien had requested her to be particularly attentive to this vulgar pair, and she knew enough of Mr. Dorrien to feel sure that he had an object in view in making the request, and that this object must be satisfied; so she bore with their rudeness in stoic silence, though with plenty of disdain in her protruded lip. Perhaps some of that disdain shot at the master of the house, who laughed so frankly and so gayly at Monsieur Basnage's sallies; who was so tenderly attentive to Madame Basnage; who looked not merely a courteous but even a delighted host. The dinner was inordinately long. Gentlemen do not sit over their wine in France, and Mr. Dorrien would not have suggested so uncivilized a custom on the day when his table was graced by the presence of a French lady. So the drawing-room was resorted to at once, and the sort of light, careless conversation suited to the occasion began to flit about.

To the surprise of Mrs. Dorrien, Mr. Plummer promptly made his way to her chair. Mr. Plummer had not much to say. Mr. Plummer seemed to have no other ambition than to ascertain the exact degree of relationship between Mr Dorrien and Mrs. Dorrien's son.

"Second-cousins?—ah! And no one between—eh?"

"The diamonds, sir!" said Mr. Brown, looking doubtful, with the key in his hand.

"Yes, Mr. Brown, the diamonds, if you please. I am so sorry to trouble you."

Mr. Brown rose and left the room. Mr. Dorrien turned back to Monsieur Basnage and said, pleasantly:

"I must let you into a bit of a secret, Monsieur Basnage. There are Dorrien diamonds, just as there are Crown diamonds. My grandfather presented them to his wife, and from her they came to mine. We went to a great ball soon after we were married, and one of the diamonds was lost. I never knew it till my poor wife was on her deathbed, when she confessed that she had had it replaced by a paste diamond. That counterfeit I know, of course, but if you can find it out, say from the distance of your chair to the sofa, why, Monsieur Basnage, I shall confess myself conquered; and now let us test your skill, for here comes Monsieur Brown with the diamonds."

Mr. Brown entered the drawing-room as Mr. Dorrien spoke. He carried in his hand a very small inlaid casket, which he placed before his master. Mr. Dorrien rose, went to the other end of the room, and there opened the casket. He spread the contents on one of the sofa velvet cushions, which he placed in a slanting position; then he walked back to his place, saying, with a smile:

"The ladies, I dare say, will like a close view. Monsieur Basnage, of course, will not."

No one present, save Mr. Brown and John's mother, had ever seen the Dorrien diamonds, and every one save Monsieur Basnage, who determinedly looked up at the ceiling, and Mr. Dorrien, who remained aloof, smiling languidly, gathered round the cushion on which the costly heirloom lay. Philosopher though she was, Mrs. Reginald was not the person least anxious to have a good view. They were beautiful diamonds, clear and pure, full of living, flashing light, and though they were not of extravagant size, they were large enough, and plentiful enough, too, to be of exceeding value. A low tiara, but with a sparkling star in the centre, ear-rings with long drops, a brooch, and a narrow bracelet, shone on the dark velvet of the cushion with purest radiance. Madame Basnage was in ecstasies; Mrs. Reginald looked, admiring, and puzzled; there was a sad

meaning on Mrs. Dorrien's face; John seemed to behold all the treasures of Golconda; and Mr. Plummer looked cool and indifferent. Diamonds, to say the truth, were mere folly to that practical gentleman. And now they all withdrew, save Mr. Brown, who stood by the cushion like a good old dragon guarding the treasures, and it was Monsieur Basnage's turn to look. He slightly bent forward, gave the diamonds a good steady gaze, then leaned back in his chair, and suspending his thumb in his waistcoat pockets, he said, with cool triumph:

"The false diamond is the last but one in the tiara."

Mr. Dorrien gave a start of surprise, but he quickly rallied, and with his usual courtesy, "I am conquered, Monsieur Basnage," said he. You are a marvelous judge."

Monsieur Basnage looked modest, while every one went to look at the counterfeit. To inexperienced eyes it was as clear, as transparent, nay, as brilliant as its companions. Mr. Dorrien laughed as he handed the costly trinkets back to Mr. Brown.

"The next Mrs. Dorrien must see about that false diamond," he said.

"Have you had them long?" asked Monsieur Basnage.

"My wife has been dead sixteen years," replied Mr. Dorrien, gravely.

Monsieur Basnage seemed to be reckoning how much the interest of these expensive heirlooms might amount to, but he did not state the figure aloud.

"It is extravagant," confessed Mr. Dorrien, smiling, "to keep up diamonds, but, you see, they are fine—"

"Very fine," significantly interrupted Monsieur Basnage.

"And we are a tenacious family. What we once hold we like to keep."

"Shall I put up the diamonds sir?" asked Mr. Brown.

"Yes, Mr. Brown, if you will be so kind."

Tiara, brooch, ear-rings, and bracelets, returned to their inlaid home, and Mr. Brown slipped out of the room, as if he would rather no one should even suspect whither he was going. Mrs. Reginald, raising her eyebrows and pursing up her lips, returned to the fireplace; Mrs. Dorrien repeated these words to herself with a swelling, half-sorrowful, half-exultant heart, "The future Mrs. Dorrien."

Her time was over, but her son's wife, whoever she might be, had a proud position before her.

"Fine—very fine," said Mr. Plummer, close by her side; "but you had seen them before, had you not, Mrs. Dorrien?"

"I had seen them, of course," replied Mrs. Dorrien, coldly.

"Mr. Dorrien will have to add to them," continued Mr. Plummer. "There should be a necklace, I fancy."

Mrs. Dorrien was silent. There had been a necklace, and she had noticed its absence.

"There must be always a necklace," persisted Mr. Plummer.

Mrs. Dorrien feigned deafness, but never had her hearing been more acute than it was then, for Mr. Brown had returned, and Mrs. Reginald, poking his waistcoat, was saying significantly, "Decebalus, Mr. Brown, Decebalus."

What could Mrs. Reginald mean? "Decebalus?" Mrs. Dorrien had never heard the name before, and what relation could it bear to Mr. Dorrien's diamonds? The thought pursued her even after the guests were gone, and, the evening's entertainment being over, she had returned to her sitting-room, where John soon joined her.

John was full of the dinner, which he thought a grand affair, and he had evidently been dazzled by the diamonds.

"Did you ever see such diamonds, little mother?" he said to her. "Why, they are like the crown-jewels in the Tower of London. I wonder where Mr. Brown keeps them?"

Mrs. Dorrien wondered too, but indeed she wondered about many things which she did not mention to John.

CHAPTER XII.

It had rained the whole morning. It was raining still. There had been no sight-seeing for John; that might be why his bright face looked rather clouded as he sat with his *mother* in her room. Mrs. Dorrien put down her work to

gaze at him wistfully. John had not been like himself for some days, and it had been raining one day only. What ailed the boy?

"I am so sorry you cannot go out, dear!" she said.

John looked at the gray, leaden sky, and said nothing.

"I like to hear your account of what you see," she continued; "you do pick up such odd bits! Was not Madame de Sévigné born near here?"

"Yes, hard by—Place Royale."

"You must show me the house. And was not her father killed by Oliver Cromwell in battle?"

"It is said so."

"How interesting! Mr. Dorrien is delighted to see so young a man as you are take pleasure in such things."

John's face, which had cleared a little, darkened again.

"But I did not come to Paris to take pleasure in such things," said he, thrusting the tongs in the smouldering wood-fire.

"Have you nothing to do?"

"Nothing that one of the junior clerks could not do twice as well as I do, little mother."

Mrs. Dorrien, though she felt troubled at the long holiday Mr. Dorrien gave her son, tried to look easy and unconcerned, and said cheerfully:

"Mr. Dorrien wants you to get used to your new position."

"I am quite used to it," coolly answered the boy.

"Then he wishes you to enjoy yourself before he sets you to work."

"And I want to work, and not to enjoy myself," replied John, austerely. "When I was at Saint-Ives I wanted to be a great scholar and pass my examination. When that was over I wanted to be a poet, and now that I have given that up I want to be a man of business. Whatever I do I wish to do thoroughly. If I am not to be something in this house, I would rather go back to London at once, look for a publisher, and owe nothing to any one," added John, in the pride and independence of seventeen.

"But, my dear, business is so difficult!" began Mrs. Dorrien, trying not to look alarmed at this prospect.

"Difficult!" echoed John, with a little laugh—"why, little mother, I have already found out that this business is

all a mistake. You have seen Monsieur Basnage?—well, shall I tell you what he does? He simply absorbs the best part of our profits, for he manufactures every atom of paper we sell. Why don't we do it ourselves?" asked John, fixing his keen gray eyes on his mother's amazed face. "There is a paper-mill down at Saint-Ives, and there could be a paper-mill on the Bièvre, close to Paris. Why should we not have one of our own, make our own paper, and keep the profit Monsieur Basnage now pockets?"

"My dear," said Mrs. Dorrien, who felt rather frightened at John's dogmatic tone, "there is no doubt good reason for not doing any thing of the kind. Mr. Dorrien may not care to extend his business."

"Then he should care," interrupted John, "for the business is by no means so extensive as it looks—I have found that much out."

Mrs. Dorrien became more and more uneasy. She did not want John to make any unpleasant discoveries, and, with a smile, she assured him that he must be quite mistaken. He was not behind the scenes yet, and had only a very imperfect notion of La Maison Dorrien.

John heard her without answering one word; but his mother felt and saw that he was not convinced.

The rain had ceased, and John, looking at the patches of blue sky, along which light clouds floated, said that he would go to the Library, Rue Richelieu, and read there for an hour, since neither Mr. Brown nor Mr. Dorrien had any work for him. The new reading-room, so clear, so spacious, with its light columns and frescoes of blue sky, foliage, and clear air, telling readers of the beautiful world of Nature, did not exist then; but in its stead, a long dull room, lined with books, and overlooking a quiet court with a little garden and a gray statue that seemed to guard forever this calm retreat of learning. Here John, plunging deep into the magic pages of Froissart, gave himself up to chivalry and mediæval lore, and forgot that he had a trouble or a care.

That swift oblivion, the gift of the young, is not the privilege of their elders. Mrs. Dorrien, sitting in her room and hemming John's pocket-handkerchiefs, could not thus easily put by the anxious thoughts which their recent conversation had—not suggested, they existed before—but

rendered more active. By what means, through whom, could she find out the truth? Mrs. Reginald might know, or at least suspect it, and Mrs. Reginald was very free-spoken, only she and Mrs. John, as, to her great disgust, she was now called, did not get on very well together. There was no open breach, but there was a persistent difference of opinion, and with it secret jealousy. Not merely jealousy of position and authority, but actually jealousy of John. Mrs. Reginald had taken a great fancy to the young man. She could imagine that her Reginald would have been like him—not in person, but in his bright ways, in his happy laugh and genial aspect. As often as she could she lured him to her rooms—a proceeding which John's mother viewed with secret displeasure; and once or twice she had filled the cup of her iniquities by going out with him. To make matters worse, John reciprocated Mrs. Reginald's liking, thought her clever and amusing, took evident pleasure in her society, and never seemed to think that his little mother could be jealous of her—or, indeed, of any one.

All this it was which made it awkward for Mrs. John now to seek Mrs. Reginald, and get information from her. Great, therefore, was her satisfaction when there came a smart tap at her door, and in answer to her low and languid "Come in," Mrs. Reginald appeared with her cloak and her bonnet on.

"Well, and where is that boy of yours, Mrs. John?" she asked, airily. "I am going out, and I want a beau."

"John is gone out," replied John's mother, delighted to find the opportunity she wanted, and also rather pleased that Mrs. Reginald should be disappointed. "What a pity he did not know you were inclined for a walk, Mrs. Reginald! But, do you know, I think it will rain again soon. Do sit down awhile with me. I really feel dull, I do."

"No, I'll not sit," dryly said Mrs. Reginald. "I think you want a lecture, Mrs. John, and I'll give you one standing," pursued Mrs. Reginald, setting her head on one side, so that her one eye might rest the more firmly on Mrs. John in her chair. "You feel dull—dull with a boy like yours! Why, if I had that boy, Mrs. John, I could never feel dull."

"Not even when he was out, Mrs. Reginald?" asked Mrs. John, smiling faintly.

"No," vigorously replied the other lady; "for I should sit and think of him."

"And so I do," replied Mrs. John, eagerly seizing the opening thus afforded; "but thinking of one's son and only child often brings on a world of care."

"Does it?" was the dry answer.

Mrs. Reginald seemed to be on her guard—moreover, she was keen and shrewd, but there was a sort of *finesse* in Mrs. John Dorrien with which the other lady could not cope. John's mother made no direct attempt at procuring information; she took, to get it, the method against which Mrs. Reginald could least contend. She assumed, as she had done from the first, that her position in the house was unassailable, and that John, as Mr. Dorrien's heir-apparent, was on the very pinnacle of worldly prosperity.

"Then there's the house," she resumed—"it is such a weight on my mind—it is so large, so—what shall I call it?"

Mrs. Reginald, still standing, inclined her head still more on one side, and looked curiously at Mrs. Dorrien.

"My dear Mrs. John," she kindly said, "don't trouble yourself about the house. Even when I am gone, Mr. Dorrien will be quite equal to it, take my word for it."

"Oh! dear, that is not what I mean, Mrs. Reginald. But you see if Mr. Dorrien begins consulting a boy like John, who naturally comes to me at this time of day, what will it be later?"

"Yes, *if* he does," ejaculated Mrs. Reginald.

"But, Mrs. Reginald, you do not seem to understand. John's position here is peculiar, very peculiar. He is but a boy, but he is his father's son"—Mrs. Reginald raised her eyebrows at this indisputable proposition—"he is the great-grandson and namesake of that Mr. John Dorrien who was the most successful of all the Dorriens, and who made the firm what it is; and all these circumstances combined give him a weight he could not have otherwise. Indeed, when I think of his position, and of his youth, not eighteen yet, Mrs. Reginald, I get alarmed, lest it should turn his head outright."

Mrs. Reginald coughed and looked at Mrs. Dorrien with *her shrewd* bright eye. "No fear of that," she said, dryly

"But there is fear, Mrs. Reginald. He is a good boy, but he was reared in poverty, and Mr. Dorrien makes too much of him; he gives him money, which I much object to; he takes him to the opera, and gives him expensive tastes and habits; and, moreover, he lets him know and understand all day long that he is to have this vast business, and be some day the possessor of great wealth. It is too much, it is too much, Mrs. Reginald."

It certainly was too much for Mrs. Reginald.

"Mrs. John," she said, in her brusque way, "did you ever hear of Gárlac of Killaune? I suppose not. Well, you must know that this Gárlac of Killaune had a step-mother, who made him a cake, a very large cake indeed, but with a stone in it. Now the Gárlac's father admired the size of the cake, but the Gárlac said to him, 'Ay, ay, a big cake, but little bread.'"

So dismayed was Mrs. John at the application of this parable that she gave a start, and said, off her guard, "Is the business so bad as all that, Mrs. Reginald?"

"Who said it was bad?" replied that lady, perceiving that she had gone too far, and guessing somewhat late that she had fallen into a trap. "My meaning is that John's position here may not be as secure and as eminent as you consider it. He is a boy, as you say, and, boy-like, he may offend or displease our Mr. Dorrien, whom we both know, Mrs. John. What then becomes of a position which he holds only on Mr. Dorrien's pleasure? If I were you, Mrs. John, I would not trouble myself about your boy's future greatness, though maybe I might ask myself if I had been wise in bringing him here?"

Mrs. John bit her lip and colored. She was more than answered in every sense of the word.

"John came from duty," she said.

"Duty fiddlestick!" replied pitiless Mrs. Reginald. "Don't I know, Mrs. John, didn't you tell me yourself all about it, and how, if your poor husband did some foolish things, he was urged to them? True, those who drove him on risked and lost money, but he risked and lost ten times more. There, don't cry. It is hard to think over it, but knowing this, as you and I do, may I not ask what duty his father's son owes to Mr. Dorrien?"

Mrs. John Dorrien looked the picture of dismay as she

heard Mrs. Reginald. The hand which held her needle and thread shook visibly as she said, "My dear Mrs. Reginald, you have not, I trust, ever said a word of this to John?"

"Do you think I was likely to do so?" asked Mrs. Reginald, drawing up her tall figure.

"Because young people are so impetuous, so rash," pursued Mrs. John Dorrien; "and then there are matters which I can scarcely bear to think of; and I have never spoken of the past to John."

"No, poor boy, I dare say you have not," said Mrs. Reginald, in the tone of one who was taking John's part against his mother.

Mrs. John Dorrien bit her lip again. "I acted for the best," she said.

"Oh! of course. The best has a broad back. Well, it is not raining, and I think I shall have my walk all the same. Don't tell John I came for him, it would only make the lad conceited."

With a nod, she took her leave of Mrs. John Dorrien, who did not feel as if she had had the best of the encounter. Poor woman, she grew very sick at heart as she thought over the past, and faced the present. She was not clear-sighted or keen enough to fathom out the motive which Mr. Dorrien must have had in bringing her and her boy to his house, but she felt sure that John was no great gainer by coming and wasting his youth in his cousin's service. Tardy knowledge, for escape and deliverance were impossible now.

Mrs. Dorrien felt miserable and restless, she could not go on with her sewing. She put it by, and looked over her chest of drawers; but that would not answer, for she came on a packet of her husband's letters, that seemed like a reproach of what she had done to his son. She closed the drawer, and put the key in her pocket, as if she would forever hide away that sad, irreparable past. Mrs. Dorrien then went and looked out from her window. The grass-grown court lay below her, dull, silent, cheerless; but there was a glimpse of the street beyond, and though it looked dark and dingy from the recent rain, it was better than solitude and bitter thoughts. She put on her bonnet and cloak, *and went out* at once. The afternoon was well worn, and

the dull autumn evening was coming on. The air felt chill and damp. Mrs. Dorrien did not go far, no farther, indeed, than the little old church of Sainte-Elisabeth. It was very quiet, and its gloom and silence did her good. As she knelt and prayed, and looked at the little lamp burning with its feeble light before the altar, hope came to her like that faithful light, and glimmered through the darkness of her troubled thoughts. She had committed a mistake, no doubt, but God is very kind, and she had meant well, and the Almighty would not punish her John for her error. And so, little by little, comfort came to her, and when she went home, Mrs. John Dorrien felt lighter and easier in her mind than when she came out.

"After all, I am sure it is a good thing for John to be here," she thought, as she passed under the lofty arch of La Maison Dorrien, and crossed once more its cold gray court. "It must be a good thing," she insisted in her own mind, with that obstinate belief in her own wisdom and prudence which only the severest lessons of experience could correct.

She had gone up the steps of the *perron*, and stood in the hall. There she became aware that the door of the library was ajar. This was one of the rooms on the ground-floor which Mr. Dorrien had denied his cousin's widow, and for which she felt, perhaps for that very reason, a ceaseless longing. She knew that John used to go and read there, and concluding that he had returned from the Imperial Library, and was there now, she went in.

The room was vacant, but a light was burning on the table—no doubt John had left it there, careless boy. She sat down to wait for him; then she changed her mind, and thought she would visit the other rooms instead. She took the light and passed through them.

It was strange that Mrs. Dorrien so wished for those rooms. They were lofty and large, but they were dull, the furniture was dark and old, and had not beauty as well as antiquity to recommend it. Moreover, these were the rooms in which she had spent the close of her married life, her young husband had sat in that leather chair, in that last bedchamber her boy had been born, and through that French window, opening out on the garden, she and he had passed—she a blooming though not very young moth-

er, he a fair, blue-eyed boy. She went up to it, she opened the wooden shutters, and stepped out on the wet grass. The dim moon was shining in the cloudy sky, and, far away, the river-god and his urn looked ghost-like in their pale, gray wintry light. Mrs. Dorrien's heart beat. She longed to call back her lost happiness, her lost youth, her lost every thing, but only tears came at her call, tears that are so much in a woman's life.

At length she turned back, but, when she would have entered the room again, she almost stumbled in the darkness, for the light was gone, and, before she could call John, she heard Mr. Dorrien and Mr. Brown talking in the next room.

"Nonsense!" Mr. Dorrien was saying, and his voice had not its usual languid courtesy—"you are afraid of your own shadow, Brown. I tell you I brought that light in here myself, because the farthest room, we said, was the safest."

"Excuse me, sir, you took the light out again when you went to look for the diamonds."

But Mr. Dorrien was obstinate, and persisted in asserting that he had taken and left the light in the room in which both he and Mr. Brown had found it. Mrs. Dorrien, who at first had been inclined to come forward and reveal her presence, seemed rooted to the spot where she stood, behind the thick curtains, on hearing the word "diamonds."

"Have you got them all, sir?" asked Mr. Brown.

"Yes, here they are—the tiara, the brooch, and the bracelet. Try and get more upon them this time, Brown."

"It is no use, sir; he will not give more."

"If he would only give a fair price for them," said Mr. Dorrien, musingly, "I should not mind parting with them."

"He will not, sir."

"No, I suppose not. And when do you start, Brown?'

"To-morrow, sir."

"You are sure he does not know you?"

"I have been thirty years out of England, sir."

"Very true. I am sorry to send you off so far, Brown, but, you see, it would never do here. I met Basnage yesterday. He has taken a fancy to John."

"Indeed, sir!"

"*Yes,*" dryly replied Mr. Dorrien. "Basnage has a

daughter. It has done very well, Mr. Brown, having this boy here."

Mr. Brown did not answer. The room was so still, that Mrs. Dorrien could hear the little snap of a jewel-case.

"All right?" inquired Mr. Dorrien.

"All right, sir."

"Well, then, good-night, Brown—be careful."

"Very careful, sir."

"Of course, you will be back by Tuesday?"

"Yes, sir, by Tuesday."

They went out together. On the threshold they probably met John, for Mrs. Dorrien heard his clear young voice, saying, "I shall be glad of the key—I want Plato."

"Plato, you young Grecian!—there, take the key."

Mrs. Dorrien heard them going out together; she also heard John moving the books. When she felt sure that he was alone, she came out from behind the damask curtain, and, stepping softly across the floor, she appeared before him.

"Mother!" he exclaimed, amazed.

Mrs. Dorrien raised her hand and motioned him to be silent.

"Do not say that I was here," she said, as she passed by him, on her way out. "I will tell you all about it later." She opened the door and slipped up-stairs unseen to her room. She reached it breathless, glad to have escaped detection, but filled with trouble and dismay at what she had heard.

And so this was the use to which Mr. Dorrien put the diamonds he had displayed to his guests only a few evenings before this! They had been reset in Paris for his wife, the young heiress, and for a few days they had been in Mrs. John Dorrien's hands. She had tried them all on, and laughingly appeared before her husband thus adorned.

"Well, my dear," he had said, with a smile, "they suit you charmingly; and who knows but you shall have diamonds as good and handsome as these some day?"

And these same diamonds, minus the necklace, which had probably been already disposed of, Mr. Brown was now taking to England to raise money on. This was the condition to which the great firm of Dorrien had fallen—this was the inheritance, the kingdom, to which Mr. Dorrien had called her son! Knowing, as she did, the cold, reckless

character of the man, she understood why he had done so. To take a penniless heir implied wealth, and might help to blind one or two. True, it might leave that one or two clear-sighted, but if ruin lay before him, what did Mr. Dorrien care for the two or three hundreds Mrs. Dorrien, and her debts, and her maintenance, and John's, might cost? If he lost all, his creditors, and not he, would pay; and if he did not lose, what matter about the money? A good card is worth any thing to a gambler who is playing his last stake, and such a card John had been in Mr. Dorrien's hand. He was worth very little, to be sure, but a little is better than nothing. For La Maison Dorrien was in too low a state to get a moneyed partner, or to lay bare its concerns to a stranger's eye; but John might be useful now or in the future, and on the chance he had been called in, thanks to his mother, and she was powerless to retrace this fatal step. Mr. Dorrien had paid her debts, brought her to his house, and he held her and John in bondage, none the less sure for being unacknowledged. John might spend the best years of his youth in this house, and what would be his gain in the end?

These dreary meditations were not over when John came up with Plato. He evidently expected his mother to explain her presence in the room below, and she did so, but in guarded language.

"I found the door open and went in," said she, "and Mr. Dorrien and Mr. Brown came in too, but did not see me. They only said a few words, but, as they left without having perceived me, I would rather they should not know that I was there. I had stepped out into the garden, and had no thought or intention of listening to them, till the thing was done, and indeed over. That is all; but of course it is better not to mention it."

John looked in some wonder at his mother; he found her manner constrained and cold, but more than this she would not say. Grievous as was her disappointment, Mrs. Dorrien was resolved to bear it in silence, to drop no hint, to make no sign which could enlighten John and give him a clew to his real position. He must learn it sooner or later, but by the time that he did learn it he would, she hoped, have given up "Miriam the Jewess," and there would be that much gain out of their grievous loss.

John read Plato, and Mrs. Dorrien brooded over her troubles, till the dinner-bell rang, when they both went down. When Mr. Dorrien took his place at the dinner-table he seemed to be in unusually good spirits. Care had not left a wrinkle on his brow. He drank his wine with zest, he laughed and jested with John, and took him to the play when dinner was over.

"I shall leave you to take care of the ladies, Mr. Brown," he said, gayly. "You look remarkably well this evening, Mr. Brown."

"I feel very well, sir," replied Mr. Brown, whom Mrs. Dorrien had watched and observed in vain. No sign of change, for better or for worse, had she seen in his stolid face.

Mr. Brown's care of the ladies did not extend beyond ten o'clock, when he left them, and the little party broke up, Mrs. Reginald to go to bed, and Mrs. John to sit up for her son. He did not come home before one in the morning; he seemed quite happy, not at all tired, and thoroughly oblivious of the fact that he wished for work, and not for pleasure.

"I suppose you enjoyed yourself?" said his mother, giving him a wistful look.

"So much, little mother! Mr. Dorrien was in such good spirits. I never saw him so merry."

Poor Mrs. Dorrien sighed; she began to fear that Mr. Dorrien's good spirits were one of the signs of the times.

The next morning Mr. Dorrien was sorry to declare that Mr. Brown, who had looked so well, had a very bad cold, and could not come to business. He took his place, and enlisted John as his chief assistant; so John, at least, told his mother.

"We are very busy just now, little mother," said John, with just a touch of consequence upon him, "and shall be so till the 4th or 5th of next month, says Mr. Dorrien. This is our paying-time, and it is bills and money, bills and money, all the day long. It is the cashier who pays, of course, but Mr. Dorrien and I look through it first —that is how I know. We paid more than ten thousand francs, which is four hundred pounds sterling, to-day. Now, suppose it goes on so for ten days—and Mr. Dorrien says it will—think of all the money that will have left our hands!"

Mrs. Dorrien winced. She knew how dangerously fine and frail is the barrier between a falling firm and insolvency.

"So much of that money goes to Monsieur Basnage," resumed John. "It is a pity, it is indeed, that Mr. Dorrien will not have a mill. I mentioned it to him to-day, but he says it would be too much trouble. Trouble!" indignantly added John, "as if one ought to care for trouble when one has an end in view."

Mrs. Dorrien suggested that Mr. Dorrien knew best, but John did not hesitate to scout the idea.

"Business is not so mysterious as you think, little mother," he said, "and this one seems to me a sort of A B C matter. It is nothing but working hard, and giving one's whole mind to it."

Mr. Brown's cold prevented his attendance, and compelled that of John the next day. In the evening he said to his mother:

"We paid nine thousand seven hundred and fifty-four francs seventy-five centimes to-day, little mother. Now if we had the paper-mill I shall venture to say that we should not have paid more than two-thirds of that money."

But, spite this censure, John continued to take note of the money that passed out of Mr. Dorrien's hands with boyish accuracy; and as Mr. Brown's cold still kept him confined to his room, to Mr. Dorrien's great annoyance, and as bills still came in, and were paid as soon as presented, John had every opportunity of ascertaining to what a sound and wealthy house he had come; but the more he was impressed with its prosperity, the more he regretted the paper-mill—that would have increased it threefold, said John.

All this time Mrs. Dorrien watched Mr. Dorrien, without seeming to do so. She found little or no change in his appearance. His brow was as smooth, his bearing as even and courteous, as ever. "He is accustomed to it," thought Mrs. Dorrien, bitterly.

"Only think, little mother," said John to her on the Monday morning. "We shall have thirty thousand francs to pay to-morrow, actually thirty, and that is fourteen hundred pounds sterling! To think of making all that *money by note*-paper and envelopes!" His tone was both

admiring and exulting, but Mrs. Dorrien's brow was clouded as she thought, "Suppose Mr. Brown should not come back with the money." But Mr. Brown did come back, or rather his cold was cured, and on the Tuesday morning he was at his desk as usual, and John was released by Mr. Dorrien. The young man, however, took care to ascertain and to tell his mother that the thirty thousand francs had been paid. "Half in notes and half gold," said John, amazed, "for I saw it all! Is it possible, little mother, that I shall ever have so much money as that?"

He spoke more in wonder than in covetousness, but his poor mother sighed, "Ah! if he knew, my poor boy, if he knew how Mr. Dorrien got that money!"

John, however, did not know, and did not even suspect; and Mrs. Dorrien, who thought she knew all, or almost all about her son's precarious position in his cousin's house, was mistaken. More information was to come; and this time she had not to seek for it, to sound Mrs. Reginald, or to listen to Mr. Dorrien and Mr. Brown. Mr. Dorrien himself was her informant. Tempted by the autumn brightness of the morning, Mrs. John Dorrien went down to the garden, about a fortnight after Mr. Brown's return. She was thinking about him, wondering when he would go away again to release the diamonds from their captivity, or, indeed, if he would ever go again, when Mr. Dorrien's voice behind her said:

"I am glad you are well enough to enjoy this pleasant morning."

Mrs. Dorrien turned round and saw him, tall, languid, courteous, and smiling. She said the morning was lovely, but confessed no enjoyment in it.

"Where is John?" asked her cousin.

"John is gone out. My dear Mr. Dorrien," she added, impressively, "do you not give that boy too much liberty—ought he not to work?"

"He shall soon work, as hard as you wish him to do so," answered Mr. Dorrien, with a smile; "indeed, his whole future, as I have planned it out for him, is not one of idleness."

Mrs. Dorrien guessed that something was coming, and became attentive.

"If my son had answered my expectations and lived, he

would have held here the position to which John is destined: but he died a few years ago, as I dare say you know, and his child being a girl—"

They were walking side by side along the one gravel path of Mr. Dorrien's garden. At the word "girl" Mrs. Dorrien stopped. "Was he married?" she could not help exclaiming.

"Oh! yes, were you not aware of it? He married a creole lady of some property, a widow and a countess. They had but one child, and that child was a girl, now about ten years old, I believe. The Countess of Armaillé —she has persisted in keeping her first husband's name— was, as I said, a lady of property, but she contrived to get through some money and land, and is now in very reduced circumstances, especially since the death of her eldest daughter, the child of her first husband. This young lady, it seems, was rich, but her wealth has not gone to her half-sister. The Countess d'Armaillé tried to enforce her claim by law and failed, and the failure, I need scarcely say, impoverished her utterly. Although I have not much reason to be pleased with that lady, she is, nevertheless, my son's widow, and the mother of my granddaughter. I have, accordingly, offered her a home in my house. She is coming, and in a few days," added Mr. Dorrien, nodding toward the windows on the ground-floor, by which they were then passing, "she will occupy these rooms."

Mrs. Dorrien was silent. She knew now why Mr. Dorrien had reserved these rooms. All these days and weeks he had had this in his mind. What would come next? Mr. Dorrien did not keep her long in suspense.

"My granddaughter," he continued, "will naturally inherit all I have to leave, but it is my wish, if the thing be possible, that this house should not pass out of the Dorriens. I have, therefore, brought John here. I find that, though commerce be not his bent—no more was it mine—he has both the will and the ability which it requires. He has only to go on as he has begun, and he will do very well; six or seven years hence he can marry my granddaughter, and carry on the business, under my control, of course, while I live. I had a great regard for his father, and I am very pleased to have it in my power to continue that regard *to poor* John's son."

If Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter had been a princess royal he could not have spoken with more condescending good-will than he did; and, bitter indeed as was her mortification to find how secondary a place poor John held in Mr. Dorrien's house after all, Mrs. Dorrien might have swallowed the bitter pill with a good grace, and not rebelled against this unsuspected rival, if it were not for the diamonds. But, knowing what she did, it was more than she could bear to find John saddled with a wife as well as with a falling house; and there was decided asperity in her tone as she exclaimed:

"My dear Mr. Dorrien, how premature!"

"Well, the young people need know nothing about it yet; but I have mentioned it to you, my dear Mrs. John, that you may, so far as in your power lies, influence your son. I need not tell you that it is for his good I speak."

"Of course—of course," she said, bitterly; "but suppose that your granddaughter, Mr. Dorrien, should not like my son—I mean, when she grows up to be a young woman?"

"I should be very sorry for John," calmly answered Mr. Dorrien. Mrs. Dorrien could scarcely restrain her indignation. "But," continued Mr. Dorrien, "I do not think it possible. John, it seems to me, has a great many of the gifts which are likely to attract a girl."

Mrs. Dorrien longed to burst out with—"But what if my son should not like your granddaughter?" but she held her tongue and was silent. She was caught in a trap. Escape was now out of the question. She owed Mr. Dorrien money, she had broken up her little home at his call, she had half cheated her son into complying with his wishes, she had diverted John's future from its natural course, and forever broken up those classical studies which she had once been so anxious to secure for him. What could she do now but submit, hard though were Mr. Dorrien's terms? And yet she rebelled, and could not help betraying that rebellion—which was probably apparent to her companion, for after a brief pause he said:

"I thought it fair, my dear Mrs. John, to mention these things to you. I need not say what my wishes are; I have just expressed them. But if yours should not coincide with mine in this particular case, why, there is no harm

done. John"—Mr. Dorrien laid his long white hand on Mrs. Dorrien's arm and looked expressively into her face—"John can go back to Saint-Ives to-morrow, if you wish it, my dear Mrs. John. He will have had a holiday and seen Paris, and there is no harm done."

Mrs. Dorrien's hot indignation fell down to zero. John go back to Saint-Ives! And how was she to keep him there? Besides, though Mr. Dorrien was too civil to say so, did not his words imply that she should go back to Kensington to work, for which, alas! her bad health and bad sight now unfitted her—to future debts, which no Mr. Dorrien would come forth to pay? She shrank from the prospect with not unnatural terror and heart-sickening. Besides, was there not that "Miriam," with her fatal Jewish beauty, to lure away her poor boy to the destruction of a poet's lot? Last, and certainly least, the comfort of her new home—comfort coming, too, at a time of life when it is most valued—withheld Mrs. Dorrien from rushing back again to the old laborious and penurious independence.

"My dear Mr. Dorrien," she said, trying to laugh, "I only expressed a very natural fear lest feelings which neither you nor I can control should interfere with your plans. I need not tell you that young people will sometimes have their own way."

"Very true; but their elders can perhaps manage so that the 'own way' of young people shall be such as they, the elders, wish it to be."

There was a moment's silence after Mr. Dorrien had said these words; then, swallowing down as best she might the bitterness that would come uppermost, Mrs. Dorrien replied:

"I shall do my best."

"I trust you will, and that you may succeed, too—for I like John exceedingly," was Mr. Dorrien's gracious reply. And thus he won the day, so far as this matter went.

CHAPTER XIII.

Winter was over. Spring had come; and spring in Paris often has days so fair that they seem borrowed from summer—days when the wind is not too keen and the sun

is not too fierce—days of sweet delusive promise that is rarely fulfilled on the morrow.

On the morning of such a day, John, who had been out on business—for he was fairly yoked to the car now, and need not complain of too much leisure—came home through Mr. Dorrien's garden, after letting himself in by a postern-door, to save a long round. The sky was cloudless, the sun was genial. There was a twittering of birds and a humming of insects in the air, and here and there little shy daisies peeped out of the grass and lifted up their modest heads in the sunlight. Even the old river-god, bending over his stone urn, had a mellower and a milder look than in the winter-time, when his hair and beard were hung with icicles, and all his outlines were rounded with a chill covering of snow.

John Dorrien felt within himself that sense of buoyant life which is the great gift of youth. He walked briskly on, whistling as he went, till he came to the fountain, where the sight of a group seated on the stone bench near it suddenly checked his blithe mood. He ceased whistling, and, if he did not step aside, it was only his good manners that prevented him from doing so.

The little countess, now Mrs. George Dorrien—for her father-in-law had inexorably insisted that she should drop her first husband's name before she entered his house—sat on one end of the bench. She was still young in years, but had got old and faded before her time, and every trace of beauty was gone forever from her face. Her hands lay idly on her lap, and the weariness of *ennui* was in her whole aspect. Nigh her sat her sister-in-law. Mademoiselle Mélanie was not much altered. She was the same tall, pale, thin woman who had flung the cup of broth across Mr. Dorrien's drawing-room carpet. That spilt cup had been very fatal to the lady, for Mr. Dorrien had peremptorily declared that, save to call on her sister-in-law Mademoiselle Mélanie should never cross his threshold. She had, accordingly, taken rooms in the neighborhood, where she slept and boarded, but she spent a considerable portion of her time with Mrs. George Dorrien. She was now as busy and industrious as that lady was idle aud inert, and her needle and thread flew through her work as swiftly as though the completion of the muslin trimming she

was engaged on were a matter of life and death. Antoinette, Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter, sat on a little chair nigh these two. The light shadow of young foliage—for she sat beneath one of the tall garden-trees—played on the child's little sallow face. She looked straight before her with sad, dark eyes. A big doll lay on her lap, a little Maltese dog was curled lovingly at her feet, but she neither played with the one nor caressed the other. She sat perfectly still, with a listlessness very different from that of her mother, for it was full of pining and sorrow, plainly expressed on her childish face. Now, if John Dorrien could have shunned this group, he would most willingly have done so. He felt a secret contempt for Mrs. George Dorrien's mental weakness, he heartily disliked Mademoiselle Mélanie, and a hint which Mr. Dorrien had dropped, with seeming but intentional inadvertence, concerning Antoinette, had utterly disgusted the youth. He was too generous to dislike the child because of her grandfather's wishes; but the mere thought that this little girl of ten should succeed to the lovely and high-souled "Miriam" in his affection was odious to him. He shunned her presence whenever he could do so, and it fortunately happened that Antoinette showed no appreciation of his company. She did not appear to dislike him—he was simply indifferent to her, as indeed every thing and every one seemed to be. She now took no notice of his approach, and indeed Mademoiselle Mélanie was the only one of the three by whom it was acknowledged.

"A lovely morning, Monsieur John," she said in French.

Monsieur John replied that it was a lovely morning. His look fell, casually perhaps, on the listless child as he spoke. Mademoiselle Mélanie shook her head and raised her eyes, so that the whites alone were visible.

"Ah!" she said, mournfully, "it was too much for the dear child; her heart is in her elder sister's grave. She has never recovered it—she never will."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Reginald, who had come up, unperceived, and now stood close to them.—"Why do you go, John?" she asked, as the young man, thinking this a favorable opportunity, attempted to slip away. John replied that he had work to do.

"*Wait* for me—I want you," said the lady.—"Shall I

tell you what ails that child of yours?" she added, addressing Mrs. George Dorrien. "She it too tall for her age. Ten! she looks twelve years old!"

"Creoles mature early," said Mademoiselle Mélanie.

"I would not let her sit so still," resumed Mrs. Reginald, persistently ignoring Mademoiselle Mélanie and addressing Mrs. George Dorrien. "I would make her run about, or play, or do any thing but sit."

Mélanie's black eyes sparkled, and she compressed her lips, but not one word did she utter. The little countess shivered, and muttered something about its being very cold. John was wondering how long Mrs. Reginald meant him to stay there, and Antoinette looked as if nothing could move her out of her languor and apathy. The little Maltese dog scratched her hand with his white paw, and thrust his nose into it. But she turned from him wearedly.

"Be quiet, Carlo," she said, plaintively.

Mademoiselle Mélanie had not answered Mrs. Reginald, and she had no cup of broth to fling across a carpet, and thereby relieve her feelings; but unluckily Carlo was at hand, and when, in spite of the remonstrance of his little mistress, he again attempted to draw her attention, Mademoiselle Mélanie darted forward, pounced upon him, and flung him against the stone god close by. The little creature fell back grievously injured, and howling pitifully. The countess put her fingers to her ears.

"You brute!" energetically said Mrs. Reginald; while John ran and picked up poor Carlo. On seeing her favorite thus treated, Antoinette at first remained in her chair like one petrified; but when she saw John bring back the dog in his arms, his white coat all blood-stained, she sprang up with sudden life, and flew at Mademoiselle Mélanie like a young fury.

"Oh! how dare you do it?" she cried, slapping her in the face—"how dare you kill my poor little Carlo! How dare you!—how dare you!" And her rage subsided into a passion of tears.

The suddenness of the attack seemed to turn Mélanie into stone, as indeed it took every one else by surprise; but when she recovered, the expression of her face became so fell that Mrs. Reginald at once snatched away Antoinette, placed the child out of her reach, and, holding the woman

fast, said firmly, "You shall not touch her—I say you shall not!"

Mélanie did not stir, but she looked at Antoinette, who was sobbing pitifully over Carlo.

"So that is my thanks," she said, in a low tone. "You did well to hold me. I think I would have killed her!—now it is over; but—but I shall never forget it!"

"Oh, Carlo is dead, dead!" sobbed Antoinette—"my Carlo, my little Carlo!"

"No, no," said John, soothingly, "he is not dead. Come with me to the kitchen; we will wash his wound."

He took her hand and led her away.

"They will all of them be the death of me," pitifully said the little countess. "I wish that dog were dead. Why did you make him howl so, Mélanie?"

"She slapped me in the face," said Mademoiselle Mélanie, nodding over the fact—"she did—I shall remember it—that was my thanks."

"She is a very wicked child," said the countess, weeping. "I wish it were she was dead instead of my other darling—oh! I do wish it."

"I dare say you do," muttered Mrs. Reginald, walking away. "Well, there's only one of them all I care for, and that is Carlo. Poor little fellow! I dare say the brute has killed or maimed him!"

But in this conclusion Mrs. Reginald was fortunately mistaken. Carlo was neither dead nor maimed, though he was much hurt. "He will do!" Such was the verdict delivered by John in the kitchen, whither he had repaired, carrying the poor little fellow in his arms, and followed by Antoinette. The cook was out of the way, and the kitchen—a room of unusual size, with spotless red-tiled floor and shining copper saucepans on the wall—was vacant. The cook's chair and footstool stood by the hearth, where a fragrant *pot au feu* simmered in the ashes of a low wood-fire. Antoinette, who was always tired, went and sat on the stool, and thence watched John as he took Carlo to the stone fountain and there washed his wound. The little patient creature even allowed the youth to bandage him with his pocket-handkerchief; and when this was done, and John softly laid Carlo on his mistress's lap, she only *sighed, and* said drearily:

"Where is the use? Aunt will kill him another time, my poor little Carlo!"

"Do you think she would actually kill him?" asked John, in seeming doubt.

"Yes," replied Antoinette, deliberately, "I am sure she would. She is jealous of Carlo, you know. She hates me to be fond of him. I am glad I slapped her in the face —bad, wicked Mélanie!" And her dark eyes flashed again with resentment, and she kissed Carlo, who gave a whine between pleasure and pain. "My poor little Carlo," said Antoinette, bending fondly over him. "She did it because she knows I am fonder of you than of any one else in the whole wide world."

"Surely you love your mother better than Carlo?" argued John, looking down at her.

Antoinette, who still sat on the cook's footstool with Carlo on her lap, looked up at John Dorrien in some wonder.

"I love Carlo best," she said, bluntly. "Mamma does not like me—she is always wishing I were dead instead of my sister. I like Carlo better than any thing or any one, and that is why Mélanie will kill him. What shall I do without him?—oh! what shall I do?"

Her tears flowed freely. She was evidently a badly-reared child, with no sense of duty, and little sense of right and wrong; but John pitied her and her grief. She loved her dog, and she feared for what she loved.

"Let me have Carlo," he said. "I will keep him in my room, and Mademoiselle Mélanie cannot get at him there."

Antoinette at first looked delighted with the proposal, then her face fell. How was she to live without Carlo, and how would Carlo exist without her?

"You can come and see him as often as you like," said John.

"But he will not eat."

"Yes he will, if you feed him."

"Where is your room? Is it far away?"

"Come with me, and I will show it to you; but let me carry Carlo. I shall hurt him less than you do."

He raised the dog carefully and tenderly, and left the kitchen, followed by Antoinette. On their way up-stairs

they met Mr. Dorrien. He had just come in, and knew nothing of what had happened, but the bandaged dog at once caught his eye, and he asked, almost sharply, what had happened to Carlo. The little creature was a sort of favorite with him.

"Mélanie took and flung him against the stone god," sobbed Antoinette; "and we are taking him to John's room, that she may not kill him outright."

Mr. Dorrien looked at John as much as to say, "Is this true?" and, though reluctantly, John was obliged to confirm the child's statement.

"Ah!" was all Mr. Dorrien said, and he went on.

John's mother was out, and John took Antoinette straight to his own room.

"Put him on your bed," she said, imperatively; and, when that was done, "Give him your best pillow—the softest. And now put a chair nigh the bed, that he may jump down when he pleases. And a cup!—have you a cup for him? Put water in it. It must stand in a saucer, otherwise Carlo will not drink. And now stay while I go and fetch his biscuit."

"Well, but I must go and work," argued John.

"Yes, but Carlo mnst be minded," replied Antoinette, still imperative. "And I think I shall bring him some of that stuff in the *marmite* down-stairs. It smelled very nice. And don't let him come after me, lest Mélanie should get him," she added, from the door.

John heard her tripping down-stairs and patiently waited for her return, kindly soothing Carlo the while. However distasteful might be to him the prospect of marrying Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter at some future day, John had none of the superfluous of dignity of seventeen about him. He was not ashamed of being kind to a dog, or even to a little girl. Antoinette, to do her justice, did not try his patience too far. She soon came back with the biscuit and the broth, which she offered Carlo, but, alas! in vain. Carlo turned his head away, and refused to eat or drink.

"He will not eat. Then he must die, if he will not eat," said Antoinette, with dreary conviction. "My lame sister would not eat, and she died."

"Your lame sister?" said John, surprised.

"*Yes*; she had an accident, you know," answered An-

toinette. "Oh! it was such an accident! I cannot tell you about it. They think I do not know, but I do. I do," nodded Antoinette. "You will not tell again, if I tell you, will you?"

"No, I shall not," replied John, with involuntary curiosity.

"Well, stoop, and I will tell it in your ear."

He obeyed, and, raising herself on tiptoe, Antoinette whispered:

"She did it—she served her like Carlo. She hated her, you know."

John Dorrien felt both shocked and startled.

"Does she hate you?" he asked.

"Oh! no," replied the child, seeming surprised at the question. "Of course she likes me, but she hates Carlo, and I must keep him out of her way."

This meant that Carlo should stay in John's room, but it also meant that Antoinette should remain in that sanctum and keep Carlo company. John, who had not foreseen this, and who dreaded some inroad on his books and papers, tried to convince Antoinette that solitude was the best thing for Carlo in his present condition; but he was so positively answered that Carlo, if left alone, must die, that he had to yield, and leave Antoinette and Carlo in possession.

Great was Mrs. Dorrien's surprise, when she came home, to hear a short bark proceeding from her son's room, and surprise turned into amazement when, entering it, she saw little Carlo lying bandaged on a pillow on John's bed, and Antoinette fast asleep on a chair by him. The child's head was buried in the counterpane, and Carlo growled fiercely as Mrs. Dorrien approached her. Indeed, he made so much noise that Antoinette awoke.

"My dear," gently said John's mother, "what is the matter? Why is Carlo here?"

"John brought him here, that Mélanie might not kill him," was the child's grave answer.

Mrs. Dorrien was not the woman to abstain from questioning on receiving so strange a reply, and Antoinette was as communicative as she could desire. John's mother listened to her with such evident interest and attention that the child's sense of consequence was awakened. She

told the story of Carlo's mishap in full, and also related that other story of her sister's accident, which she had already imparted to John, and she added thereto particulars into which he had forgotten to inquire.

"Well, my dear," soothingly said Mrs. Dorrien, "all this is very sad, but I dare say little Carlo will get well; only he must not stay here. We will find a nice place for him, dear, where he shall be quite safe. Is that your handkerchief binding him? No, I see it is John's," and internally the careful mother sighed over the foolish boy's use of those best cambric handkerchiefs which she had only just hemmed for him.

But Antoinette could not hear of removing Carlo. He must stay, she said, for, if he did not, Mélanie would certainly kill him. Mrs. Dorrien was obliged to acquiesce in this necessity, but she made the best of the incident by getting into Antoinette's good graces and confidence, till the luncheon-bell rang, when Carlo was locked up for security. After luncheon, Mrs. John had a brief and quiet conversation with Mr. Dorrien, to whom she told all that Antoinette had related concerning her half-sister and Mélanie. Whether through the information she imparted, or because of his own conclusions concerning the violence of temper exhibited in the incident of the dog, Mr. Dorrien informed his daughter-in-law that Mademoiselle Mélanie must enter his house no more, not even as a visitor.

It is hard to say how some people acquire the power which they exercise over others. If Antoinette's story was a true one—if the violence of her mother's sister-in-law had really caused the fatal accident, which first maimed, and perhaps ultimately killed, her elder sister, it was hard to understand how the mother of the injured child, to whom that child's death had brought both poverty and dependence, could lament, as she now did, the loss of Mademoiselle Mélanie's society. She gave no reason for doing so; she could not say that she wanted Mademoiselle Mélanie for any particular purpose—for profit, for pleasure, for amusement, for consolation or comfort—but looking pitifully up in Mr. Dorrien's face, she uttered a helpless "What shall I do?" which was, perhaps, the best of all reasons. She did not love that dark, sinister, tyrannical woman who ruled her, and, indeed, all that came within her reach, with

a rod of iron; but she had been ruled so long that her liberty terrified her. What should she do, indeed, without Mélanie to lean upon, to think, act, and even talk for her? The vision of such liberty was disastrous to her untutored mind, and bewildered her. Mr. Dorrien, nevertheless, adhered to his resolve, and ignored his daughter-in-law's distress. He could not, however, help declaring that in his opinion a person of such violent temper as Mademoiselle Mélanie was scarcely fitted to be the close companion of his granddaughter.

"Yes, I know," plaintively said the little countess, "and she is so dreadful; but still, you know, what shall I do?"

But, as we said, Mr. Dorrien ignored her distress, and submission was her only lot.

Carlo, who recovered more rapidly than could have been expected from the severe treatment he had got, thus won back the freedom of the house, and, indeed, was considered a sort of hero, and became popular. Mrs. Reginald took notice of him "because he had been so ill-used, little fellow," and Mr. Dorrien really thought that dog had been invaluable in giving him a decent pretense for expelling Mademoiselle Mélanie. He also attributed to Carlo the good understanding which had suddenly sprung up between John Dorrien and Carlo's little mistress.

"You and Antoinette seem to get on very well together," he said to John on the second morning that followed Mademoiselle Mélanie's exile.

"Yes, sir, we do," answered the lad, blushing; but the remark annoyed him, and had wellnigh destroyed the very result which Mr. Dorrien wished for.

John did not become unkind to the child—he was incapable of that—he did not even snub Carlo, who seemed to remember that he had received the hospitality of his room, but that same afternoon he had what he considered a decisive conversation with Antoinette, whom he found sitting in the garden, with Carlo lying on her lap. Carlo was dull, she said, and she requested, rather imperatively, that John should amuse him. John laughed the idea to scorn, and kindly informed Antoinette that he was much too old for such nonsense. She might amuse Carlo, but it was out of the question that he should do any thing of the kind.

In short, he impressed the child with the fact that Time had placed between them one of those barriers through which no good-will on either side can ever break. Antoinette looked at him in perplexity. She did not think John old, and she brooded over all he said till she could endure this state of doubt no longer; so, carrying Carlo in her arms, she made her way up to Mrs. Dorrien's room, and peeping in at the door, she said, in her old-fashioned way:

"Please, may I come in?"

"Certainly, my dear," was Mrs. Dorrien's ready answer. "Sit down on that low chair. You are tired carrying Carlo."

"No, it's not that, but you live so high up, Mrs. John —so very high up."

"My dear, it is only a second floor."

"Well, but it is high up," plaintively said Antoinette. "I feel so tired when I come up to see you, Mrs. John."

Mrs. John looked compassionately at the little pale face. Would that frail bud ever blossom? But Antoinette had not come up to complain.

"Mrs. John," said she, looking earnestly at the lady, while she nursed Carlo, who fondly licked her little thin hand, "how old is John?"

"He will soon be eighteen. Why do you ask, my dear?"

"Because that is old—very old, is it not?"

"Eighteen is not old, my dear."

"Oh, but John says so!"

Mrs. Dorrien gave a start and looked nervous; she questioned the child, learned from her all that John had said, and, with a mother's quick intuition, saw at once what his motive for saying it had been. Her heart fell at the thought that Antoinette might be as communicative with her grandfather as she had been with herself; and, though that was not likely—for Mr. Dorrien seldom addressed a word to his granddaughter, and scarcely looked at her—though, as we say, that was not likely, Mrs. Dorrien hastened, as far as she was able, to repair the mischief.

"Well, my dear," she soothingly said, "it is very true, that now John is much older than you are; but some years hence you will be quite of an age, and it will be all right. You will be a young lady then."

Antoinette looked thoughtful, but not satisfied; she would probably have put more questions if Carlo had not whined.

"I must go," she said, rising. "Carlo wants to be in the garden. Good-by, Mrs. John."

"Good-by, my dear. Take care of the steps."

But doubt still haunted Antoinette's mind, and, instead of going straight down, she stood still on the staircase, and looking up at Mrs. Dorrien, who was bending over the banisters to watch her slow descent, she said:

"Please, Mrs. John, do you mean that John will stop growing when I am a young lady?"

"And, pray, why should John stop growing when you are a young lady?" asked John, who came bounding up the stairs, light, active, and buoyant.

Antoinette did not answer, and Mrs. Dorrien colored up and tried to laugh.

"There, dear, mind the steps," she said, going down to help the child. "Give me your hand; there, that will do nicely."

They went down together, and presently Mrs. John returned alone to the room, where John stood waiting for her, in reality, though to all seeming he was looking over the contents of his blotting-case.

"Poor little thing!" said Mrs. Dorrien with a sigh as she closed the door, "how delicate she is! Will she ever get over that cough of hers?"

"Do you think she will die?" asked John, with a look of sudden concern.

"My dear, I do not say so; I only fear that she is very, very delicate. And, if you can humor her, do so, my dear. Poor Mr. Dorrien has plans for her which may come to naught, and in the mean while say nothing to the child which might make mischief if repeated."

John fixed his bright gray eyes on his mother's face, and said, in his straightforward way, "What do you mean, little mother?"

Mrs. Dorrien coughed. "My dear, you have been talking to Antoinette about your age, and all that. Better make no remarks—let Mr. Dorrien have his plans; it may all end in naught, as I said."

They exchanged looks. They had never spoken of

Antoinette, and Mr. Dorrien's wishes concerning her and John, and yet each understood the other. John remained awhile, red and silent, standing with the blotting-case in his hand; then he said, distinctly and deliberately, "I shall never marry Antoinette."

He spoke so positively, so much in the tone of one who knows his mind, that his mother heard him in blank dismay. At first she could not speak; at length she said:

"You surely will not tell Mr. Dorrien so? You are both so young—the child may die—so many things may happen."

"I will tell him so if he questions me, mother—I must."

Mrs. Dorrien was frightened, and tried argument. How could John tell that some years hence his mind would not change? Why, then, settle this matter so long beforehand, and injure himself with Mr. Dorrien? He need promise nothing, he need only be silent.

"My mind will not change," replied John; "I shall never marry Antoinette. She is capricious, ignorant, passionate, and she seems to have no sense of right or wrong; besides, she is a little girl."

"My dear boy, she will not always be so, and she may alter and improve, and though you dislike her now—"

"I do not dislike her," protested John, with some vehemence; "on the contrary, I am fond of Antoinette, but I shall never marry her!"

"How can you be sure of that, John?"

But John was quite sure—and is there any certainty like that of seventeen?—that his feelings would never alter, so far as Antoinette was concerned. In short, the little girl had no chance, and with a sense of gloomy despair Mrs. Dorrien felt that she had every chance of going back to the old life of poverty. She gazed at him as he stood before her, straight, tall, unbending in attitude and temper; yet gentle and tender-looking in the pleasant light of the spring morning which fell on his brown curls and fresh, pleasant face; and she could not help saying, with some bitterness, as she pressed her hand to her aching lips:

"How can you be so hard to me, John?"

"O little mother, how can you say that? I am not hard to you! You know what brought me here, what made me give up all I cared for! I did it because you told me *that,* involuntarily of course, my poor father had wronged

Mr. Dorrien, and that, so far as I could, I ought to repair that wrong."

"My dear, I did not say that exactly," faltered Mrs. Dorrien, rather scared to have this brought up, "at least, I did not make it a matter of duty for you to act as you have acted. I mean," she stammered, "that I left you free."

This was almost too much for John, but he compelled himself to say quietly:

"I do not regret having come—since it was right that I should do so; but no duty, no honor, can make it right that I should be driven into marrying Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter. And I never will."

"But, my dear boy, all I ask is that you should keep your own counsel."

John did not answer. His mother did not seem to understand that this was a matter of honor, that he must tell the truth if he was questioned. She also ignored the fact that, boy though he was, he had a right to defend his liberty. He had never thought of marriage, for maidens like "Miriam the Jewess" rarely lead youths to so practical a conclusion, but, when the subject was forced upon him, his whole being revolted against compulsion. He could not realize another Antoinette than the one he knew, the pale, childish, capricious child, the passionate, willful, and, as he had quickly detected, very badly-reared mistress of Carlo, who really had little or no sense of right or wrong. Marry her! He would die first!

Mrs. Dorrien did not sleep much that night; she revolved a hundred plans, none of which seemed good or practicable in the morning, and all of which luckily proved quite useless. Antoinette was delicate, and she had a cough! But was she threatened with a decline, as her mother averred, and was the climate of the south of France really necessary to her? The doctor did not go quite so far, though he confessed that Paris did not seem to suit Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter. Mr. Dorrien himself showed less interest in the subject than might have been expected. He was weary of his daughter-in-law's society, and rather dreaded lest his granddaughter should fall ill on his hands. The matter was soon settled. Antoinette was pronounced to require the mild air of Mentone, and thither she and her mother both repaired, before April had yielded to May.

"I must leave you, poor Carlo," said Antoinette, as she and John parted; "for Mélanie would kill him, you know. You will give him his biscuit, poor little Carlo!"

Thus all Mrs. Dorrien's present apprehension came to naught, for once in Mentone, Antoinette and her mother staid there, and Mademoiselle Mélanie with them.

"Mind my words, Mr. Brown," said Mrs. Reginald emphatically, "Antoinette is no more consumptive than I am. It is all that Mélanie's doing."

CHAPTER XIV.

THERE were rooms to spare in the official regions of l'Hôtel Dorrien. Mr. Dorrien had his, Mr. Brown had his, and to John also a room was allotted. There he sat and wrote the formal uninteresting letters of business, which Mr. Brown assigned as his share of the work. John's room was large, dull, and quiet. It overlooked the court-yard, faced the north, and never received a ray of sun. Sitting at his desk, John only saw the tall windows of the house with the high roof, and beyond its dark line the clear Paris sky, where the swallows belonging to the old mansion wheeled round their nests in rapid circling flight. In this room, with Carlo lying curled round on a chair by him, John Dorrien spent the long, dull, and tedious summer days; and in this room we find him on a bright summer morning, brooding somewhat discontentedly over his lot. The confinement, the monotony, and the uselessness of this life of business, seemed hard to the classical scholar of Saint-Ives. The delightful world of poetry and eloquence he had once moved in was closed. Others more favored could enter that happy region and linger there, but its gates must open for him no more, and he had not instead the hard work which might have seemed a compensation to his active mind and ambitious temper.

"If we only had the paper-mill," he now thought, while his hand idly caressed Carlo's little white head, "or if I were only deeper in the business to take an interest in it!

But is it not enough to sicken a fellow, accustomed to work as I have been, to sit here day after day doing nothing but watching the swallows?"

The sight of these Paris swallows, who darted about with pale breast gleaming in the sun, brought back to John's mind the swallows of Saint-Ives. All at once the life of study he had forsaken came back to him in vivid pictures, such as only young fancy can paint with outlines keen and clear. The room in which he sat, the desk on which lay the letter he had just written, vanished. The scene changed; a gray, cloister-like light stole in through the tall window of the *salle d'étude* and fell on the Greek page before him; the pale, ascetic face of the Abbé Veran, sitting far away on his raised chair; the dark and blond heads of his fellow-students; the scribbling of pens on paper; the buzzing of drowsy flies; the very murmur of the summer wind through the branches of a young tree waving its boughs outside in happy idleness—all returned to him with strange distinctness. And there were swallows, too, in the sky of that autumn morning in the holidays, when he took the long walk in the low flat country round Saint-Ives with his friend, confidant, and enthusiastic admirer, Mr. Ryan. What a morning it was! Rosy clouds flushed the dappled sky of dawn; they reddened fast the low horizon and the quiet waters in which the cattle stood knee-deep. How lazily these calm, Flemish-looking cows gazed at the broad landscape, tinged with the hues of an early autumn! The foliage of the mighty oaks which grew on either side of the stream was already sere and yellow, and the tall red ferns below them, which the hot August sun had scorched and shriveled, would soon wither in the cold, equinoctial winds, till not a token would be left of all that tender green beauty which had been so fresh and fair in spring.

"A glorious world!" had said Mr. Ryan, in his cheery voice; "and 'tis all your own, my boy, for this world belongs to the poet—and you *are* a poet, my lad, if ever there was one."

And was this delightful time really over for John?—and could he never go back to "Miriam the Jewess," and Mr. Ryan, and fame, and liberty?—had it all vanished, as the swallows had vanished out of the cool northern sky of that

morning? Yes, it was so. The kind, swarthy face, with its grizzling locks, had passed away out of John's daily life; the genial voice would cheer him no more—the words of promise and hope would never again fall on the young poet's ear. He was not a poet now—he was Mr. Dorrien's cousin, one of the great Maison Dorrien; and Mr. Brown, who came in with two letters, laid them on the young man's desk with the scrupulous politeness due to his position.

"Work for me, Mr. Brown?" said John, starting up with alacrity at the thought of exertion.

"One letter to copy, sir, if you please; the other is for you, and was taken to Mr. Dorrien by mistake. Mr. Dorrien starts for London at three this afternoon, and he desired me to say that he wished to see you again before he left."

"I shall not go out," said John, opening the letter addressed to himself, and which was in Oliver Blackmore's handwriting.

"If you please, Mr. John," remarked Mr. Brown, "the letter is wanted at once."

"Then I shall do it at once," replied John, putting down Oliver's letter with a smile.

The strict discipline of Saint-Ives had taught him obedience. Immediately, without giving Oliver's epistle another look, he copied the long, dry letter before him. When his task was done, he went into Mr. Brown's room, saying cheerily:

"Here is the letter, Mr. Brown. Any thing more for me?"

"Nothing more, sir," replied Mr. Brown, with the ghost of a smile flitting across his faded face.

That young voice and look, so bright and cheerful, always did him good.

John went back to his sitting-room, where Carlo was waiting for him with a wistful face that seemed to say, "I thought you were really gone, and I am glad you have come back," and snatching up Oliver's letter, he read it twice over, then put it down with an impatient sigh. Oliver wrote pleasantly and banteringly—he never wrote otherwise; and in a postscript he informed his friend that Mr. Ryan was mourning for him, John Dorrien, as Calypso

mourned for Telemachus, or Ulysses, or both; and, "by-the-by," airily added Oliver, "the painter of Calypso has gone to finish her in Elysium—in other words, he is dead, and Calypso is to become a sign-board."

"Poor old fellow!" thought John; "he painted bad pictures, but he liked Oliver, who likes no one save Mr. Blackmore, and who laughs at the dead just as he laughs at the living. Let him! I like Mr. Ryan's little finger better than I like Oliver's whole body; and I will see him again—I must; and I have a great mind not to stay here copying stupid letters, but to be off and try my fate. Mr. Dorrien does not want me, and it is nonsense to stay and lose my time, with the prospect of having to say no to marrying a little girl in the end."

This marrying of the little girl Carlo, who was innocently licking his paws, unconsciously suggested. The mere thought of it had brought a cloud to John Dorrien's brow, and he stood brooding over his wrongs, present and prospective, when the door of his room opened, and Mr. Brown, with fate in his looks and a telegram in his hand, appeared on the threshold.

"Mr. Dorrien has been thrown from his horse, and has broken his arm," he said, oracularly. "He is at the restaurant in the wood, and wants us both directly."

John was at once all amazement and dismay, and poured forth rapid questions; but Mr. Brown laconically answered:

"I know nothing, sir; only we must go at once, if you please—and Mr. Dorrien does not wish this to be spoken of till he comes home."

"I shall not mention it," replied John, reddening—and Mr. Brown took care that he should not do so, for within the next two minutes they both entered a cab that was waiting for them in the street.

That day was a memorable one in John Dorrien's life. It was as one of those landmarks with which Time now and then separates the phases of a human existence, and he never forgot its slightest tokens. The long, silent drive through the sunlit, noisy street; the hot and glaring avenue of the Champs Elysées, climbing up to its massive triumphal arch; the sudden shade and freshness of the green wood on that fatal morning, remained clear and present to him for years.

They found Mr. Dorrien sitting alone in one of the private rooms of the restaurant. His arm was already bandaged and in a sling, and from the sofa on which he sat he was looking down composedly on the little sunny lake which lay beneath the open window. He turned round on their entrance, and holding out his hand to Mr. Brown (it was the left limb that was injured), he said, quietly:

"A vexatious accident, is it not, Mr. Brown? Luckily my old friend, Doctor Parker, was on the spot, and set my arm beautifully; but he advised me to stay here till the cool of the evening. I fancy I have just a touch of fever," added Mr. Dorrien, speaking as abstractedly of all this as if the case had been that of a total stranger.

"I hope you do not suffer, sir," John could not help remarking.

"Nothing to speak of," replied Mr. Dorrien, with his languid smile; "but of course there is no going to London," he added, with an expressive look at Mr. Brown, who returned it gravely, saying, "Of course not."

"I think of sending John in my stead," resumed Mr. Dorrien, still looking at Mr. Brown.

"He is very young, sir," replied the clerk.

"Too young; but what can we do?"

They both spoke as if he had not been present, and John, who was idly looking at the white swans floating on the lake, stared to hear himself thus freely discussed. Mr. Brown was silent.

"He must go," resumed Mr. Dorrien, almost doggedly. —"John," he added, turning to the youth, "close that window, if you please, and attend to what I say."

John obeyed, and standing with his back to the wall, and his arms folded, he listened to Mr. Dorrien, grave, attentive, and watchful. There was no need to tell him that he had been brought out there for no common purpose.

"But for this unlucky accident, I was to leave Paris to-day," began Mr. Dorrien; "but I was not going to London, as you suppose—I was going to St. Petersburg, on important business, which you will have to transact in my stead. I take it for granted," added Mr. Dorrien, with some dignity, "that you will not shrink from the fatigue of a long voyage, nor even from annoyance and risk on behalf of the firm."

"I shall not," replied John, the quick blood mounting up to his brow.

"Of course not," resumed Mr. Dorrien, approvingly. "Well, the business you will have to transact is this. You will arrive in St. Petersburg next Tuesday; you will call at once on Mr. Bowers, an Englishman, who has a house of business there, and settle accounts with him according to the instructions contained in this letter, in which are inclosed your credentials. You will receive the money—fifty-seven thousand francs—leave on Wednesday, and be back here by the 26th of this month. You will find it fatiguing, but feasible," continued Mr. Dorrien, composedly. "You are young and inexperienced, but you are also quick-witted and sufficiently determined. I feel confident that you will be successful, and will return safe and sound by the appointed time. While I was waiting for Mr. Brown and you, I drew up all the instructions you require. Here is 'Bradshaw'—you will find some information at page 586; but my instructions are better. With these and a well-filled purse, you can find no real difficulty in accomplishing your errand."

John fastened his bright gray eyes on the speaker. We have already said it—it was very hard to deceive this young man. Perhaps to guard him against the perils of a trusting tenderness, which was the very root of his nature, Providence had bestowed upon him a penetration unusual in his years; perhaps the strong spirit of truth that dwelt within him was a lamp which lit his path in life, and made him quick to detect the falsehood which lies hidden under plausible speech.

"This is a very unusual way of settling accounts," he said. "Why must either you or I take a long and expensive journey to get this money from Mr. Bowers?"

"Because we have tried to get it otherwise, and have failed," dryly replied Mr. Dorrien.

"Is Mr. Bowers unable or unwilling to pay that money?"

"He is quite able," said Mr. Dorrien, emphatically, "but decidedly unwilling."

"But if he can pay, he must," persisted John.

"And so he will—in the course of time," sneered Mr. Dorrien.

Then it was time that was precious—it was in delay

that danger lay. And all for fifty-seven thousand francs—twenty-two hundred and eighty pounds sterling. A large sum, but surely not one that ought to sink the brave Dorrien ship.

"If Mr. Bowers is so unwilling to pay, will he pay me?" asked John.

"You must make him," answered Mr. Dorrien, looking hard at the boy. "If he is out of town you must follow him; if he is at home, and will not see you, you must enter the house by some means or other and see him. He will quibble, ask for delay, say he is ill, do any thing perhaps to make you lose time. Do not mind him, do not believe a word he says. Use threats, if need be, and do not hesitate to put them into execution. Shrink from nothing; apply to our consul, and if that will not do, use threats, I say. He is a coward, and will give in. But whatever you do, however you manage, come back by the 27th with fifty-seven thousand francs, for on that day the best part of the money must be handed over to Monsieur Basnage."

This was plain speaking, and John understood it. His color faded at the menace of suspended payments, disgrace, and ruin, which hung over the Maison Dorrien—that Maison Dorrien which he had thought solid and sure as the Bank of England. He looked at Mr. Dorrien and at Mr. Brown; he expected to find them pictures of dismay, but the one was as gracefully composed and the other as imperturbable as ever. Mr. Dorrien was smoothing his chin, and Mr. Brown was comparing his watch with the bronze timepiece on the black-marble chimney of the room. Had John been mistaken after all?

"What is the object of that Mr. Bowers?" he asked point-blank.

"To get us into difficulties, and raise another house on the ruins of ours," composedly answered Mr. Dorrien. "No other firm of the kind carries on so much business with Russia as La Maison Dorrien, but if it were gone, or had an awkward check, why, Mr. Bowers has a son here in Paris who is both ready and willing to take its place."

John knit his brow, and his eyes flashed.

"Let him," he said, with something like defiance—"let him, I say, and get the money elsewhere."

"Will you kindly tell me how?" sneered Mr. Dorrien.

"Have you not got the diamonds?" impatiently demanded John — "the bright, costly, useless diamonds! Pledge them—sell them—do any thing, but do not show Mr. Bowers that you are in his power."

"Thanks," said Mr. Dorrien, "but the diamonds have already done all they could do for La Maison Dorrien."

The truth flashed across John Dorrien's brain, and his lip curled with scorn as he realized it. The diamonds had been brought out that evening to dazzle Monsieur Basnage, but these Dorrien diamonds were as worthless after a fashion, and cheats as great in their way, as the counterfeit that blazed its false light near their clear lustre.

"The diamonds are gone," said John, "and Mr. Bowers knows that La Maison Dorrien is in his power, and he thinks he can do it any wrong with impunity! Has he no fear of affecting his own credit by refusing to pay?"

"No," dryly replied Mr. Dorrien; "besides, he will not refuse to pay; he will invent some excuse—say your credentials are forged, or that there is a mistake, or any thing that will justify the delay of a few days."

"And a few days will be fatal to La Maison Dorrien," said John; "for La Maison Dorrien is a falling house."

John looked Mr. Dorrien in the face as he uttered these ominous words, and that gentleman felt that the boy had sprung into sudden manhood, and that he must be true with the man who stood before him, for he would tolerate no equivocation and accept no falsehood.

"La Maison Dorrien has seen better days," replied Mr. Dorrien, bitterly; "but it may be saved yet."

"How so?" asked John; "and for how long? You have no capital, and, so far as I can see, no credit. All I do see is a pit, and a deep one, Mr. Dorrien."

Mr. Brown looked scared at the young man's plain speaking, but though Mr. Dorrien's pale brow flushed, he showed no temper.

"What else have you got to say?" he asked, coolly; "because we are losing time."

"I have nothing else to say," answered John, as coolly, "but that if I can save the firm I will."

"Just so," was Mr. Dorrien's composed answer. "Well. Mr. Brown will see you off, and supply what may be want

ing in your outfit.—You have brought the money, Mr. Brown?"

"Yes, sir, I have."

"Then I suppose we may consider the matter settled," said Mr. Dorrien, looking rather wearied. "You need not go home, John—that will spare needless questions."

"I must bid my mother good-by," replied John, quietly, but very positively.

"Must you?" exclaimed Mr. Dorrien, with a laugh. "Well, you will please not to speak of St. Petersburg. You are going to London, as I was."

"I cannot tell an untruth, sir," said John.

Mr. Dorrien looked annoyed.

"Then do not go home," he said, impatiently. "I shall manage that."

"I can manage it very easily," replied John. "I shall not tell my mother where I am going."

"Do you not understand that I want no appearance of mystery?" said his cousin, looking provoked. But John was impracticable. He would neither deceive his mother, nor go without bidding her adieu. Mr. Dorrien and Mr. Brown exchanged perplexed looks.

"Why trouble about that?" asked John, with sorrowful impatience. "Do you not see, both of you, that this thing, this little bit of mystery, is nothing? It is the other thing which is all, and in that I may fail. I am young, as you both of you said a while back, and though I can hand him over your credentials, Mr. Dorrien, it may suit Mr. Bowers to treat me like a boy, and not give me one farthing of that money."

"Be not a boy, then—be a man," said Mr. Dorrien, with a sudden and dangerous light in his languid blue eyes. "You are a good shot; I know you have a steady hand, a sure eye, and a brave spirit. You will not let the firm whose name you bear, and whose honor lies in your keeping, go to ruin for want of pluck. Of course," added Mr. Dorrien, with marked emphasis, "I advise no violence, but you will travel armed. Let Mr. Bowers feel that you are not to be trifled with. You do not look a boy, John; besides, you have a great advantage. Mr. Bowers thinks his delays and false pretenses have deceived us so far; he is not prepared for your appearance. Surprise will be

your ally.; do not weaken it by any delay you can avoid. And now," added Mr. Dorrien, rising, "let us go. I am tired of this place."

John was very silent all the way home. He understood now what sort of a firm it was whose fortunes he had been called to share, and whose honor he was asked to save. He understood, too, how weak or how formidable a thing commerce can become in feeble or in unworthy hands. Mr. Dorrien's puerile attempt to dazzle Monsieur Basnage with the diamonds—an attempt which could not delay the fatal payment one hour—filled John Dorrien with contempt. The deliberate villainy of Mr. Bowers to hasten the ruin of a falling house by non-payment of a just debt, till payment should come too late for its salvation, filled him with abhorrence.

"Surely," thought John, in the pride and confidence of youth—"surely, if ever I stand at the helm of the Dorrien, and steer her on, it shall not be with such little tricks; and surely, too, I shall be able to make her float in waters where no such sharks as that Mr. Bowers are found!"

"What is the heavy day next month?" suddenly asked Mr. Dorrien, addressing Mr. Brown.

"The 23d is our heaviest day, sir," answered Mr. Brown.

Mr. Dorrien sighed wearily, and John's dream fled. They had entered the Rue de la Dame, and the old hotel rose before them with its 1720 graven in stone above the mansion gate-way. 1720!—a proud boast, but how long would it last? How many more "heavy days" were needed to blot it out forever, as if it had been written on sand, across which a stormy wind was sweeping?

CHAPTER XV.

THE whole of that morning Mrs. Dorrien was haunted with a presentiment of coming evil, against which she strove in vain. Like a presence it followed her about the house. She went to the garden, and found it there, a dark shadow between her and the bright summer sun. Sixteen

years ago, in that same dwelling, on a day like this, with a sky as clear and a sun as bright as those of to-day, that sense of a sorrow at hand had been with her, and that day had ended in tears and widowhood—in a grief which time had never fairly healed, and troubles of which John's mother still felt the bitter sting. Therefore she feared, therefore she was anxious, startled at the least sound, moved by every breath; and yet, what evil could be nigh? She framed an excuse to send for John, but John had gone out with Mr. Brown an hour ago in a cab, she was told. Well, surely there was no cause for fear in that. John must be safe with Mr. Brown, and Mrs. Dorrien breathed, relieved, and told herself that it was all right, till the fear came back again, darker, deeper, more tormenting than ever.

Mrs. Dorrien would willingly have sought refuge from her own thoughts in the society of Mrs. Reginald, if that lady had been within; but she was not, and she did not venture to leave the house and call on any of the few friends of her married life whom she had found again in Paris, as one may find a few leaves still clinging to an autumn tree. She felt chained to home. It seemed as if the trouble she was expecting were a visitor whom she did not dare to disappoint. He might come with his hands full of calamity, but Mrs. Dorrien must wait for him, and abide his stern pleasure. So, woman-like, she sat in her lonely room, still sewing for John, brooding over anxious thoughts, but stitching all the time.

Mrs. Dorrien had had an old nurse once who was a great dreamer, and who, when any event happened in the day that corroborated her visions of the night, was wont to say, "Well, my dream is out." So did she think at first, that her presentiment was out, when Mr. Dorrien came home with his broken arm in a sling, till John, who brought her the tidings, added quietly:

"Mr. Dorrien cannot travel, so I am to go in his stead. I came home to bid you good-by, little mother."

"You are going instead of Mr. Dorrien?" she exclaimed, with sudden paleness on her faded cheeks.

"Yes, he has asked me to do so."

"Then you are going on business—on business to London? How odd!" She spoke with evident uneasiness. All her nameless fears had come back. John was silent.

"How odd that Mr. Brown should not go instead of you!" she continued. John was still silent.

"Then it is not to London you are going!" she cried, starting to her feet. "Of course not—where are you going, John?"

"Little mother," he replied, resting his arm on her shoulder, and looking earnestly in her face, "I must make haste to go—so good-by."

"But you cannot be going so, now, without your things!" she cried; "you must pack up, and your linen has not come back, and—"

"A carpet-bag will do me," interrupted John. "Mr. Brown is to see me off. What I need he will supply."

But if John meant to say nothing, this was too much. Visions of a long voyage, of India, of the Atlantic, flashed across his mother's mind and terrified her. She stopped him as he was turning to his room, and said, almost angrily:

"You must tell me where you are going, John—you shall!"

"I cannot," answered John, and his tone was inexorable, as when he told Mr. Dorrien, an hour ago, that he would not leave without bidding his mother good-by. Mrs. Dorrien heard him, and felt both hopeless and helpless. Here was this boy of hers going off on some perilous journey, she was sure; and she was not to know the why and the wherefore. He was the most precious thing she had, but she had put this treasure of hers in the keeping of another, who cared little what risks it ran, so his ends were served.

"My boy, my own boy," she said, clinging to him, "you cannot leave me so! I must know where you are going, on what errand! I must! I cannot trust you so far alone, and not even know why you, a mere lad, are sent instead of Mr. Brown."

"Mr. Brown is too much wanted at home, little mother; and now let me go, dear, for Mr. Dorrien is waiting for me, and I must take a few things, I suppose."

What could she do? She must yield, but she laid her head upon his shoulder, and cried there. John kissed her, and, leading her to her chair, he sat down by her.

"I shall not be long away, little mother," he whispered, fondly; "you will scarcely know I am gone, when—"

"Yes," said John, "I will. Good-by, mother."

He kissed her rather coldly, she felt, and going to his room, which he left by another door, thus he parted from her. And it was over, and she had cheated him into this life, which he hated, and brought him to a falling house, to be buried, perhaps, in its ruins; and she had betrayed her miserable equivocation—all in vain. He was gone—to danger, to death, for all she knew—and she might never see him again.

This was their parting. John did not come back, nor did she try to see him again. To do so she must have sought Mr. Dorrien's presence, and that she hated, just then, with all the bitterness of her trouble. She sat as John had left her, tearless and heart-stricken; then, when she heard carriage-wheels roll out of the yard, and felt that all was over, she went and lay down on her bed, and let her sorrow come over her in all its dreariness.

Presently she was roused by the sound of a firm step across the floor of her room and of an abrupt though not unkind voice, which said close to her:

"Well, and what is it all about?"

Mrs. Dorrien raised her heavy lids and looked at Mrs. Reginald, who stood by her bedside, looking down at her with her head on one side.

"John is gone," piteously said Mrs. Dorrien.

"That is just it. What is it all about? Mr. Dorrien has been and broken his arm, and John is gone—goodness knows where! And what is it all about?"

Mrs. Reginald spoke with mingled curiosity and concern. She liked John, and felt a strong interest in his welfare; and, as she was a person who never allowed any kind of ceremony to stand between her and her pleasure, she had come to John's mother for the information which Mr. Brown had not been willing to supply.

"Mr. Dorrien has taken him from me, and John is going the way his poor father went," said Mrs. Dorrien. "He is sending him off armed to the teeth, on some errand which he dare not face himself—and, Mrs. Reginald, shall I ever see my boy again?"

"Indeed *I* trust to see John again," hopefully replied Mrs. Reginald, "and be sure that you will, Mrs. John. And now," she added, sitting down by her and taking her

hot hand into the kind grasp of her own long, bony fingers, "tell me all about it, dear."

Mrs. John could not resist that appeal. Her heart was full—she could not carry its burden in silence any longer, so she told Mrs. Reginald all, or almost all—ay, even how she had confessed to John what she had hidden from him till then, and how, spite that confession, he had gone all the same.

"Of course he did go, the brave boy!" cried Mrs. Reginald, her one eye sparkling. "You would not have had him stay behind like a coward. How could he, Mrs. John? But the two men should not have sent the lad on such an errand as this seems to be. I told Mr. Brown so. Now, don't you imagine that I think he runs any risk," she quietly added, as Mrs. Dorrien buried her face on her pillow with a groan; "no, no, that is not what I mean; but of course he has been sent on important business, and of course, being so inexperienced and so young, he may fail; and if he does, why, it will just cut him, the proud boy, to the heart."

"I do not think he will fail," said Mrs. Dorrien, sitting up, and speaking in a short, broken voice. "John never has failed in any thing he undertook."

"There, dear, don't mind what I said," soothingly replied Mrs. Reginald, "and don't worry yourself. Why, your hand is like a coal, and your poor face looks on fire. Now don't be ill while John is away."

"What matter?" bitterly replied John's mother; "he would go, though I asked him to stay. What matter even if I die before he comes back?"

"Nonsense!" decisively answered Mrs. Reginald, "you are not going to die;" but she added internally, "You are going to be very ill, poor soul, and no mistake."

Mrs. Reginald's fears were fulfilled that very evening. As John was on his road eastward, looking at the sun setting over the low landscape, the same warm, red light stole in through the window of his mother's room and flooded the bed where she lay tossing in fever, while Mrs. Reginald sat by her side, softly saying, "Poor thing! it has been to much for her. Poor thing!"

And too much for John's mother this last trial nearly proved. She had suffered much for sixteen years, endured

privation and sorrow. She had spent sleepless nights and eaten poor food. She had worked hard, too, and known the weariness of the hireling; and now that rest and comfort and ease had come, they had brought new and bitter troubles in their train—troubles which overpowered her, like a burden too heavy for her strength. To have brought John to Mr. Dorrien's house, pledged him to share its ruin, and for all she knew its disgrace, and to have lost something in his regard, and yet to see him go on Mr. Dorrien's errand, in spite of all she could say or do to detain him, was too much for her; she had been ailing long, and was ready for disease.

It came now, and had its day with her—a bitter, cruel day of fever and burning pain. But what evil is there that does not work some good? From what root of sorrow does not some sweet blossom of comfort spring?

Mrs. John and Mrs. Reginald had never been friends—they had never liked each other; and Mrs. Reginald, to say the truth, with her arbitrary ways, sharp speech, and abrupt manners, might fairly bear the blame of such a state of things. Now all this was altered. Mrs. Reginald took it into her head that she had a gift for nursing, and that she could as good as save the life of John's mother, which was in some danger for a week, by nursing her herself. So she took possession of the sick-room, a faithful, tender, and devoted attendant, and, woman-like, she could not help getting to love the poor, helpless sufferer, who said to her with such a wistful look, with a voice so pining and so low, "O Mrs. Reginald, what should I have done without you?"

Mrs. Reginald's private opinion was that the nurse who attended Mrs. Dorrien under her would have been the death of that lady; a firm conviction of her own superiority over every one, in whatever she undertook, being one of her characteristics.

"And is it not well that you have me, dear?" she once answered aloud, in her brisk, cheerful voice. "Give me that vial," she imperatively added, addressing the nurse, who thought she might venture on pouring out some medicine in a glass. "There, that's the way to do it," continued Mrs. Reginald, nodding at the nurse, who stood in too much awe of her not to submit.

She had as great a contempt of amateur nursing as any of her class, but Mrs. Reginald had been a good friend to her, and her tongue was tied.

"And now take that, and get well," continued Mrs. Reginald, turning to Mrs. Dorrien, and helping her to sit up and take her medicine.

Here the nurse made a furtive but wholly abortive attempt to smoothe the patient's pillow. Mrs. Reginald pounced upon her at once, and, looking at her askance, asked her what she was about, then showed her "how to do it;" and having performed her double duty, and reproved the nurse, who, though florid and good-tempered, looked decidedly affronted, she returned to her arm-chair, and, reclining back in it, closed her eyes and took a nod.

Mrs. Dorrien lay awake, thinking in the vague, feeble way in which sick people think. The past and the present, illness and sorrow, all mingled together in her weak mind. That little table, on which the night-lamp shed its faint circle of light, had stood in her room the very night that John was born. Who was that heavy, red-faced woman nodding in her chair? The nurse? Yes, she was ill, and wanted a nurse. And that was Mrs. Reginald, with her kind, brown face, who now looked at her so gently and so pityingly.

"Mrs. Reginald!"

"Yes, dear;" and at once she was by the bedside.

"Do you think he will ever come back?"

"My dear, didn't I tell you that Mr. Dorrien has heard from him, and that he is well?"

"Yes; but do you think that he will come back?"

"Of course I do."

Mrs. Dorrien sighed and turned her face to the wall; after a while she turned back again, saying:

"Mrs. Reginald, if I should be taken before he comes back, you will be kind to my poor boy, will you not? You know what this house is, and you see how they use him; but you will be kind to him, will you not?"

"Ay, dear, surely," replied Mrs. Reginald, in a moved voice; "but you will live, and do that part of the business yourself."

She spoke cheerfully, but was not so sure of the truth of what she said as she chose to appear. Her heart was

heavy as she went back to her chair, and, no longer attempting to sleep, sat there and thought.

"The poor thing is very weak," she said, in silent soliloquy—"very weak indeed, and the doctor has said that such weakness may end fatally. Well, it will be hard if the poor boy finds his mother's coffin when he comes back. Poor boy, poor boy!"

She shaded her eyes with her hand, that Mrs. Dorrien might not see that they were filling fast. Her heart—a kind and gentle one, spite her abrupt ways—ached for the absent youth, and also for the poor patient lying there before her, with her pale face resting so death-like on her white pillow. Her patience and her resignation had endeared her to Mrs. Reginald; and when, two days after this, the physician who attended Mrs. Dorrien pronounced her safe, Mrs. Reginald's "Thank Heaven!" was as fervent a one as was ever uttered.

"So now you are all right, my dear," she said to John's mother, with more zeal than prudence; for to be all right implied that Mrs. Dorrien had wellnigh been all wrong; "and John will soon be here, says Mr. Brown, and you will be better than ever after this illness, I'll be bound."

"And it will be worth while having been ill to find so true and kind a friend," answered Mrs. Dorrien, looking at Mrs. Reginald's rather stern face with grateful eyes.

"Well, perhaps it will," confessed the other lady; "for you see, my dear," she added, tucking her in and smoothing her pillow, "we are fast friends after this. And all I am afraid of is, that we shall both spoil John."

On hearing which, John's mother smiled faintly, and asked, in a weak, low voice:

"What day of the month is it, Mrs. Reginald?"

"It is the 26th, my dear."

"Perhaps he will be here by the 1st," sighed John's mother.

The secrets of nations are not always well kept. There are whisperings in the air that reveal to listening multitudes when calamity is at hand. But nothing in Mr. Dorrien's offices, counting-house, or ancient dwelling, with its look of comfort and affluence, revealed that danger threatened that honorable firm and well-appointed household. Security, calmness, and ease, were impressed on all that

Monsieur Basnage saw when he called to transact some slight matter of business with Mr. Dorrien on that same morning of the 26th. But, long after he was gone, Mr. Dorrien sat alone, anxious and moody. A telegram had told him that John had been successful, and was coming home with the money. But what if some accident should occur? what if the lad should not be back by the 27th? Every plan that Mr. Dorrien and Mr. Brown had thought of to guard against this contingency, and secure the fifty-seven thousand francs independently of John's prudence or good fortune, had been given up in its turn. To all there was this fatal objection—that some one must be trusted; and Mr. Dorrien would trust no one with the knowledge that La Maison Dorrien was so hard pushed for money. No; not the most friendly of bankers, not the trustiest of clerks in a telegraphic office, should have it in his power ever to betray that secret. John would not have been trusted could Mr. Dorrien have helped it. "But then," mused Mr. Dorrien, "he is a Dorrien after all, and there can be no fear."

CHAPTER XVI.

Mr. Brown, sitting in his room and going methodically through his work, had his own thoughts. He hoped that the good ship which he had helped to steer so long would weather this storm; but then he knew that, when this particular peril was over, some other would come—some fatal leak, some unsuspected strain on the timber of that ancient craft, which kept a noble look, but was rather the worse for the wear and tear of a hundred years.

So, though Mr. Brown too was anxious about John's return, his anxiety was of a steady kind, like that of one who knows that the game is not won for just one turn of the wheel. His own feeling was that Mr. John would be home before the fatal 27th, but he had not chosen to tell Mrs. Reginald as much; and when, on the afternoon of that same 26th, his room-door opened and John stood before him, pale and rather worn, but with a firm look about

him, Mr. Brown was neither much surprised nor much elated.

"Glad to see you safe home, Mr. John," said he. "We got your telegram. And so it is all right?"

"Yes—all right," said John. "Mr. Bowers was taken by surprise, as Mr. Dorrien had foretold. I had no trouble with him, and here is the money. Is my mother well, Mr. Brown?"

Mr. Brown, who had opened the pocket-book which John had laid on the table, and begun counting the notes, paused to reply:

"I have not seen Mrs. John to-day, but—"

Here the door of the room opened, and a servant appeared with a message from Mr. Dorrien. He wished to see the two gentlemen at once in his own room.

Mr. Dorrien's own room was on the ground-floor. It was a room full of comfort and ease—not speaking of a fatal 27th coming on the morrow. There were pictures on the walls—good modern pictures—landscapes fresh and dewy, homely scenes, but with laughing peasant-girls in them. There were bronzes—copies of the antique from Barbedienne's—a few books too, and, with these, every quiet comfort which a man learns to prize when life is gently declining. But pleasant though the aspect of this room was, John's face grew almost stern as he entered it; and, though Mr. Dorrien rose from the couch on which he was reclining and greeted him kindly, the young man kept his upright, unbending attitude.

"I have brought the money, sir," he said.

"That is right, John; you have been very successful, and you had no trouble."

"None—Mr. Bowers handed me the money almost without a word."

"Oh! you managed it to perfection," said Mr. Dorrien, with his graceful courtesy.

John shook his head in impatient denial.

"Any one provided with your credentials could have done as much, sir," said he.

"No, John, not any one—your name of Dorrien impressed Mr. Bowers, you may be sure."

John did not deny, but remained standing at the head of Mr. Dorrien's couch, taller, more unbending than ever.

There was something hostile in his attitude, but Mr. Dorrien was bent on conciliation, and said pleasantly.

"I hope your next journey will be more agreeable than this has been, John; though it cannot be more fortunate for us than this first one."

Perhaps there was a little covert sneer in Mr. Dorrien's voice as he spoke thus, but it was not that which kept John silent awhile before he answered.

"I shall not travel again, sir."

"Why not? Your *coup d'essai* has turned out a masterpiece."

"I mean that I shall not stay here."

A flash of anxious surprise passed through Mr. Dorrien's blue eyes. His pale cheek colored slightly as he slowly addded:

"Are you dissatisfied, John? What cause of complaint have you?"

"None, so far as your treatment of me goes, sir," answered John, honestly; "but I do not like the life."

He did not add that he had come to La Maison Dorrien under a false impression; but it was in his heart as he looked in Mr. Dorrien's face.

"You do not like the life!" repeated Mr. Dorrien, with a stare; and even the imperturbable countenance of Mr. Brown, who had done counting the precious money, betrayed his amazement. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that, as any other clerk could do what I do, I need not stay here."

"And you do not find this out till I have trusted you as I would never dream of trusting a clerk unless he bore the name of Dorrien!" exclaimed Mr. Dorrien, sitting up on his couch to look at John with cold anger and jealous suspicion. What! the secret which he had guarded so long, that secret which, though it might be known to Mr. Bowers in Russia, was safe still in France; that secret of his weakness which his enemies, or his rivals, as dangerous as foes, would so triumph over, was in a boy's keeping, and that boy could dare to speak of leaving him!

The doubt, the reproach, stung John.

"When I leave this house," he said, "I shall forget every thing I have no right to remember."

"You would have nothing to forget if you had spoken

a fortnight back," said Mr. Dorrien, sharply. But, spite his resentment and offended pride, he could not help saying, "What is your motive?"

"I wish to lead another life," answered John.

His look, his tone, his manner, were straightforward. Mr. Dorrien felt he spoke truly. He shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked covertly at John, who, unmindful of the gaze, stood looking through the open window at the golden sunlight as it was passing across the garden trees. Panting like a caged bird for liberty, he watched the broad boughs waving impatiently, as though they bade the sun set quickly and leave them to the cool and dark repose of night. "They too want to have their own way," thought John. "Well, I shall soon have mine. Mr. Ryan will be glad when I tell him that I have given up Mammon; but little mother will not like it."

"We must take time to think over this, John," said Mr. Dorrien, after a pause. "The firm of Dorrien may seem under a cloud, but for all that you will find it worth your while to remain with me. You will give me your final answer to-morrow.—Mr. Brown, I believe you have letters for Mr. John Dorrien."

Yes, Mr. Brown had two letters, and he placed them in John Dorrien's hand. One was in Mr. Ryan's cramped but welcome handwriting; the other letter, large, square, edged with black, was the intimation of a death or a funeral.

"May I go now, sir?" asked John, wondering who was dead, and turning to Mr. Dorrien with the letters in his hand. "I have not seen my mother yet."

"You had better not go in too abruptly upon her," said Mr. Dorrien. "Mrs. John has been very ill, and—"

"Ill!—my mother has been ill!" interrupted John, turning pale.

"She is out of danger now," composedly said Mr. Dorrien.

"Out of danger!" cried John, "and I never knew it."

"My dear fellow," said Mr. Dorrien, quietly, "you traveled as fast as the post, if not faster."

"But not faster than a telegram," said John, turning to the door.

"Which would have worried you, unfitted you for business, *and not* made you return one hour earlier."

Mr. Dorrien's coolness raised John's indignation to boiling heat.

"The business was yours," said he, with his hand on the door, "but my mother is mine, Mr. Dorrien, and you had no right," he added, with flashing eyes, "to keep her illness or her danger from me while I was doing your errand."

He left the room, and ran up-stairs in passionate grief and indignation; nor did he heed Mr. Dorrien's caution. He knew better than to fear that the sight of him would injure his mother. Without knock or warning he entered Mrs. Dorrien's room, and found Mrs. Reginald sitting there, with his mother's hand clasped within her own. The red sunlight lit their two faces, one brown and healthy as ever, but the other so wanlike that John could scarcely know it again.

"O little mother, how ill you have been!" he breathlessly said.

"Yes, my dear," she feebly replied. "I did not think I should see you again."

"Mrs. Reginald, how long has my mother been ill?" asked John, for the change on his mother's face was that of a long and wasting disease.

"Ever since the day you left."

John compressed his lips and went to the window.

"Don't talk, don't flurry her, there's a dear boy," said Mrs. Reginald, following him, and laying her hand on his arm, as she spoke low.

"I shall not," replied John, coming back to the bedside.

Standing there, he looked down at his mother in sorrowful silence. His mother had been ill, so ill that he and she might never have met again in this world, and John remembered that there had been bitterness in their parting —and he had not known it.

"They never told him his mother was ill," thought Mrs. Reginald, whose look rested upon him. "Shame! shame! For what if she had died?"

But Mrs. Dorrien only looked up fondly in John's face, and said, kindly:

"Never mind, dear, it is all over now, and Mrs. Reginald has been so kind. And don't you want something to eat, dear?"

John had eaten on the way, and said he was not hungry; but Mrs. Dorrien, mother-like, wanted her young to feed, and plaintively insisted. Mrs. Reginald also said that he should have something, and to please them both he consented.

"And I shall see that the boy does eat, Mrs. John," said Mrs. Reginald, rising to go down with John Dorrien. "I will have no cheating, and I shall soon be back, dear."

"John," said she, as they went down together, "you must not look so woe-begone. Your mother will soon get round. You see she can have every comfort here. Ease, rest, good wine. What letter is this that you have dropped?" she added, picking up and placing once more in his hand the black-edged letter which John had forgotten to open. It bore the postmark of Saint-Ives, and at once his thoughts flew to Mr. Blackmore. He had been ailing. Was this the intimation of his decease?

But, no, Mr. Blackmore had not been summoned to his account. The bearer of those tidings of which man lives in dread had not reached or crossed the threshold of that old château embowered with trees, beneath whose spreading shade ran the clear waters of the little stream which John remembered so well. The swift and silent messenger, who comes and makes no sign, had bowed low another head, the head of a childless man, whose inheritance, a few old books, was to enrich John Dorrien. Mr. Ryan was no more. So said the *lettre de faire part*, in John's hand, inviting him to attend the funeral-service, to take place in the parish church of Saint-Ives, at eleven in the morning, on the 26th of the month.

"Bad news, John?" said Mrs. Reginald, moved with the amazed grief which she read in John's face.

"Mr. Ryan is dead," replied John, in a very low voice.

"My poor boy, I *am* sorry. I know how you liked him!"

"And this letter is from him," said poor John, looking at the other letter in his hand, which now seemed as if it came to him from another world.

He could say no more. They had reached the bottom of the stairs, and he went out at once to the garden to read Mr. Ryan's letter there—the air of the house seemed stifling. The sunlight had not yet faded away from the trees

and alleys; the brown old houses which were around the garden looked warm and genial in its glow, and sent back sheets of gold from their glass windows; a little bird was hopping daintily in the grass path, pecking on its way; a bed of gay *reines marguerites*—pink, crimson, purple, and blue—made a bright patch of color in the green shade; and every thing seemed airy, cheerful, and lovely, as belonging to a world knowing neither death nor decay, when John read the last letter which Mr. Ryan ever wrote to him. It was a happy letter, genial and hopeful, telling John that he (Mr. Ryan) was coming to Paris to see him; "and we will go over Lutetia together, my boy," wrote Mr. Ryan, "and I will show you a thing or two; and we will have our day in Versailles like arrant sight-seers, and prowl about those green courts and formal alleys dear to the Grand Monarque and his lords and ladies. And we will call up all the old ghosts that haunt the spot, and walk up and down the *tapis vert*, and talk of 'Miriam!'"

John Dorrien had shed no tears when he came home and found that his mother had been at death's door while he was away. The blow had been too cruel and too keen to move his young manhood so; but he could have cried like a child as he read this, and Mr. Ryan's brown face rose before him with its happy smile—that face now hidden forever in the little green church-yard of Saint-Ives, that smile as utterly vanished as yesterday's sunshine. He could have cried, but he did not. The trials of the last fortnight had steeled and hardened him strangely, and, when Mrs. Reginald, who had followed him, came up to him, looking wistfully in his face, all he said was, "I shall not tell my mother yet, Mrs. Reginald."

"No, of course not," she answered; but she felt, as she said it, that she must expect to know no more.

John went back to his mother's room, and parried her questions as best he might, for Mrs. Dorrien saw at once that something ailed him; but even she, partly because she was weak, partly because there was that in John's face which forbade it, did not insist upon knowing what that something was. He spent the rest of the day with her, taking Mrs. Reginald's duties and arm-chair, with that lady's gracious consent; but he did not speak much. Thought was with him—and Thought is an absorbing com-

panion, who will have the full mind and ear of whoever she fastens on. As he sat bending over the low wood-fire—for Mrs. Dorrien required warmth—he seemed to read his past and his future in the embers. The past, a bright dream already fading—the future doubtful, perplexing, and, whichever way he turned, full of trouble.

"What is he thinking of?" wondered Mrs. Dorrien, watching him from her bed.

Alas! Mrs. Dorrien's boy—her little Johnny—was solving for himself that riddle of life which she had tried to solve for him, and he found it hard to read. The sanguine mood in which he had told Mr. Dorrien a few hours ago that he wished to lead another life was gone, and in its stead there had come to him the dullness of sorrow. He wondered now that he had ever cared for "Miriam," for poetry, for fame, for liberty—any thing. Was he a fool, or had Mr. Ryan committed a fatal mistake? Who knew?—who could tell? He brooded long over this question. His mother, who was still watching him, saw him bend over the fire and read a letter twice over by its light, then remain in a long, deep dream; then rise, go to his room, and come back—her heart, spite her weakness, gave a great throb—with a sealed packet in his hand. Had "Miriam"—his boyish passion, his first love, that fatal "Miriam" whom Mrs. Dorrien still dreaded—won the day at last? John sat down again, and held the packet for a while—it was not a large one, when you thought of all the promises which it had once held—then he, of whom Mr. Ryan had predicted that he would rival the fame and genius of John Milton, thrust the packet into the fire, and looked at it burning and shriveling with a sad and moody look.

We are never nearer to submission than after a strong fit of revolt; it is when we have just claimed and won liberty that we oftenest let it escape us once more: so it was with John Dorrien.

"O my boy, my poor boy, what have you done?" said Mrs. Dorrien, from her bed, leaning forward as she spoke to see the manuscript burning. She spoke as she felt, in much grief. She did not wish "Miriam" to prevail, but neither would she have had her boy's dream end thus.

"*It is better* so, little mother," replied John, coming up

to her, and trying to speak cheerfully. "I have burned my ship, and can never go back."

He did not tell her that he had done it chiefly for her sake, and to secure her the ease and comfort of a safe home; he did not tell her that Mr. Ryan was dead, and that Faith and Hope had seemed to go down to the grave with that ardent friend; he abided by the destiny he had chosen, and his regret, if he ever felt any, remained unspoken. And so La Maison Dorrien, which had undone a country gentleman in Mr. Dorrien, undid a poet in his young cousin. And thus it is forever through life. We have all of us capacities for a hundred positions in which we are never placed. We often have to act the part least suited to our bent, and, when we die, He who made us alone knows how good or how evil, how great or how mean, we might have been. Men of royal natures never rule; tender-hearted women never love, and fine poets never write a line. Life is too strong for them. A dozen children absorb the energies of one, a plain face conquers the other—the genius has no time. What matter, after all, so we do well what we have to do, so we keep our lives pure, and our souls raised to God?

The next morning John met Mr. Brown at the door of Mr. Dorrien's room.

"I hope you are not really going to leave us, Mr. John," said Mr. Brown, with just a shade of uneasiness on his sallow face.

"Oh! no," replied John quietly, "I am not."

He had a brief conversation with Mr. Dorrien, and it was all settled. By some mysterious intuition or other, Mrs. Reginald seemed to know the point that had been at issue between Mr. Dorrien and his young relative.

"My dear lad, you have done well," she said, laying her hand on his arm and looking at him with her kind brown eye. "Your poor mother could never battle with life again."

"No, she could not," answered John, and he bowed his head beneath the yoke—that hard, hard yoke of necessity before which, young or old, we all must bow.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANOTHER seven years had passed away. They had told heavily on Mr. Dorrien. He looked more languid, more listless, more impassive than ever, as on a beautiful morning in early autumn—a morning clear, fresh, and sunny—he leaned back in a leather arm-chair, and looked out on the garden through the open window of the library. This room was that in which John Dorrien habitually sat, and here his cousin had thought to find him, and was waiting for him now. With a wearied air Mr. Dorrien gazed on the glimpse of blue sky, green foliage, and bright flowers, before him. Nature was silent for him now, and her seasons came no more with their hands full of promises. Silent, too, was that fair world of intellect which his forefathers had gathered in that room where volumes in brown calf and tarnished gilding awaited, on long oaken shelves, the leisure hours of the Dorriens. A few modern works had been added by John; also a bronze copy of the Louvre Polymnia, who stood there, with her cheek resting on her hand, and her look of calm meditation—a strange contrast to all the books, circulars, and commercial papers of every sort, scattered upon John's desk. What brought her here, the fair Grecian muse, whose brow, though thoughtful, was wreathed with flowers?—what brought her to that room, where John sat day after day in anxious meditation, that had nothing to do with his young love, "Miriam the Jewess?"

Mr. Dorrien, who had never heard of that episode in his cousin's life, had often wondered at his selection of that slight, graceful figure for his daily companionship. A Demosthenes, a gladiator, or any other vigorous antique, he could have understood as a young man's choice; but he lacked the key to the past, which might have told him how and why this Polymnia, with her meditative grace, was dear to John Dorrien's heart.

"A pretty thing!" he now thought, following with a critical and approving eye the draped outlines of the young muse—"a very pretty thing! only quite inappropriate here."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Mr. Brown, opening the door and casting a hasty glance round the apartment, "I *thought* Mr. John Dorrien was here."

"I thought so too," replied Mr. Dorrien, with impatience. "I have just got that letter from Monsieur Basnage. What does he mean, Mr. Brown?"

He handed the letter to Mr. Brown, who went up to the window and perused it attentively, but the broad sunlight which fell on his yellow face (on him, too, the seven years had told), and thence on the written page, revealed nothing to Mr. Brown's intellect.

"I do not understand it," said he, after a pause of consideration. "Monsieur Basnage seems to refer to some order which he received last month."

"I gave him none," murmured Mr. Dorrien, shutting his eyes wearily. "I wish Mr. John Dorrien would have these letters directed to himself. Where is the use of fretting me with business which I do not understand?"

"Mr. John Dorrien does not like to presume," suggested Mr. Brown.

"Yes, yes, I know he means well, but it is tiresome.—You wanted something, Mr. Brown—can I do any thing for you?"

"No, sir, I think not," candidly answered Mr. Brown. "Mr. Plummer wants to see Mr. John Dorrien about some new people down in Rouen."

"Who want to have dealings with us?" suggested Mr. Dorrien.

"Yes, sir, large dealings—very large dealings."

"Too large?"

"I fear so, sir—I fear so. They are very new people."

Mr. Dorrien seemed to think the matter over.

"Yes, better leave Mr. John Dorrien to manage with Mr. Plummer," he said, after a pause. "Any thing else, Mr. Brown?"

"Verney brought these."

Mr. Brown took a chair as he spoke, and handed his master a series of designs for the fancy note-paper which, for the last six months, had become the *specialité*, as they called it, of the Maison Dorrien. These designs were very varied, very fanciful, and sometimes very pretty or very foolish. One was a Cupid dressed like a postman, and holding out a letter; another was a flower—a plain heart's-ease, or French *pensée*; a third was an initial letter in a wreath of roses; a fourth was mediæval in character, and

might have adorned a missal—all were executed in water-colors, with great taste and care.

"The initial letter and the heart's-ease are to be half-raised," remarked Mr. Brown.

"Yes, I suppose so. Well, I am sure I can't say whether they will do or not, Mr. Brown," said Mr. Dorrien, putting down the designs on the table before him; "better leave them here for Mr. John Dorrien—it was he who first brought this branch in, and he understands it very well."

"It has been very useful," said Mr. Brown, significantly—"very useful."

"Oh, very; I do not know what we should have done without it, Mr. Brown."

Mr. Brown thought he knew, but, as his knowledge was not of a pleasant nature, he did not express it in words.

"Then I shall tell Verney to leave them and call again," said he, nodding toward the designs.

"Yes, Mr. Brown, if you please; and will you give this note of Basnage's to my cousin, and ask him either to answer it himself, or, if he thinks that I should do so, to come and have a talk with me this afternoon? Now," added Mr. Dorrien, taking out his watch and looking at it, "I think I shall go out—I do not feel very well this morning."

The door opened as he rose, and Durand—now no longer volatile, but grave, already bald, and indeed rather morose—came in with a telegram. It was for John Dorrien, but Mr. Dorrien tore it open and glanced over it.

"Now, this is provoking!" he exclaimed, addressing Mr. Brown in English. "This telegram is from Mr. Hall, of London. I know that, when he was last over, John applied to him for information about having a depot in Buenos Ayres, and here is the answer; and Mr. Hall is most urgent about our catching the boat. 'See about it at once,' he says. Really Mr. John Dorrien should not be out of the way, in the morning especially."

"It does not happen often, sir," Mr. Brown remarked, with a half-wistful look, "not often."

"No, it does not; and Heaven knows I grudge him nothing, Mr. Brown; only you see so much rests upon him"—("So much!" thought Mr. Brown—"every thing!")—"*that he* cannot be missed with impunity. Well, this

must wait, and yet, if it is not attended to to-day, we lose this boat, says Mr. Hall. Well, I think I shall go now, Mr. Brown; it is no use my staying within, so far as I can see."

So Mr. Dorrien left the room, and had his horse saddled, and presently rode out, as he did every morning now, carrying his wearied, languid looks down the Rue de Rivoli, and thence down the Champs Elysées till he reached the shaded avenues of the Bois de Boulogne.

Mr. Brown placed the letter, the telegram, and the drawings, in his clear, methodical fashion, on the table, so that they should be the first objects to catch John Dorrien's sight when he came in; then he returned to his own room. He had not long been gone when the door of the library opened again, and John Dorrien himself entered the apartment.

John was twenty-four now. He was not much taller than when we saw him seven years ago, but he was much altered. Strength of body, and gravity of aspect, were the characteristics of his young manhood. John Dorrien had given himself up to business, as he gave himself up to every thing, entirely, and thought and care had left their signs upon him. His gray eyes had all their early fire and tenderness, but the sunshine seemed to have left his face, till a word, a thought called it back, bright as ever; for, after all, John Dorrien was young, twenty-four, no more, and though Providence had placed a heavy burden on his shoulders, it was not more than he could bear. Much work and little leisure—such was his portion now, a hard one for the classical scholar of Saint-Ives, and the ambitious boy-poet whom Mr. Ryan had placed on a level with John Milton.

His keen look at once detected the letter, the telegram, and the drawings, which Mr. Brown had placed in readiness for him. He took the telegram first, stood with it for a while in his hand meditating, then threw it by carelessly. Mr. Hall was very kind, and meant well; but he, John Dorrien, felt in no hurry to catch the boat; that matter could wait. Mr. Plummer's epistle met with more favor; the house in Rouen seemed a safe house to John Dorrien, and he went at once to select such wares as might suit Norman and provincial taste. He crossed the sunlit court, with the sky looking down over the dark edge of the slate

roofs; a swallow was whirling gayly in the blue air, and John gave her a look of envy. "It is well to be you," he thought, "it is well to be you." But once he had entered the dark old rooms in which the paper was stored, piled from floor to ceiling in gray packages of unpromising aspect, John Dorrien became the man of business, and forgot the swallow, the sunshine, and the clear September sky.

Monsieur Durand was the custodian of the Dorrien wares, and John Dorrien found him walking about the rooms with a pen behind his ear, and a note-book in his hand.

"The book of samples, if you please," he said briefly, as he sat down before a large table heaped with portfolios. Monsieur Durand took one of these, placed it before his young master, and resumed his sauntering examination of the wares placed under his care. John Dorrien opened the book of samples, and turned over the contents with quiet attention. Nature had bestowed upon him two of the gifts which help to insure success in business: intuition and tact. Mr. Brown's experience, Mr. Dorrien's judgment and taste, were often at fault; John Dorrien's mistakes were slight and rare. He seemed to know without effort the thing which it was wise for him to do. These Rouen people wanted the newest vignette note-paper of the Maison Dorrien; well, some of the newest they should have, but only that which John Dorrien thought good for them—only that which he considered sure to go off well in the great commercial Norman city. He selected a certain quantity of patterns of note-paper and envelopes, put them by, and said to Durand:

"You will show these to any one who comes in Mr. Plummer's name, but you will show nothing else."

Monsieur Durand looked up in a sort of doubt. Only a dozen or two of patterns, when there were dozens upon dozens to dispose of—when some, as Durand knew, hung heavily on the hands of La Maison Dorrien.

"Only these patterns will you show," repeated John Dorrien, rising.—"When is Verney coming again?"

"I believe this is he," replied Monsieur Durand.

"Then let him come here at once."

The door of the store-room opened, and a slender, dandyish young man, with a very dissipated face, hands which

a prince might have envied, they were so beautiful and white, and dainty little feet, shod in marvelous Parisian boots, entered the dark room in which John Dorrien sat. The new-comer was redolent of the fragrance of the best cigars, and looked at the young merchant through half-shut, languid eyes.

"One would like to kick that fellow!" muttered Durand sourly; but John Dorrien's fine, intellectual countenance only relaxed in shrewd amusement.

"Well, Verney," he said, quietly, "I have glanced over your novelties, and do not like them much. They are not worthy of your usual taste and fancy, Verney. A little too much of the green lady in them. I must have something fresher."

"In what style?" asked Verney, languidly.

"I want it for any large commercial city—give me something—"

"In the railway line?" interrupted Verney, with a little sneer. "I know—an engine on the rail, or any thing of that kind?"

"Give me something pastoral or idyllic," resumed John Dorrien, as if he had not spoken—"any thing of Arcadia that you can compass; and, Verney, I must have it soon, or not at all. Let me see, to day is Monday—well, then, by next Wednesday I shall expect you."

He rose, as if the matter were dismissed. It was his way of dealing with Monsieur Verney, whose insolent temper could not otherwise be kept within bounds.

"By next Wednesday, eh?" he said, carelessly. "Well, I shall see."

He turned on his heel with a nod and let himself out. As he crossed one of the outer rooms, he found Durand there, still busy with his note-book.

"So some new commercial town has turned up for the vignette?" said he, inquiringly.

"Has there?" retorted Durand.

"Saint-Etienne, Lyons, Rouen?" continued Verney.

"Very likely," replied Durand, with great tranquillity.

"Better tell me—I shall find it out."

"Do."

Verney did not answer this, but walked out, then turned back.

"Have you any matches?" he asked.

"You will find some at the tobacconist's opposite," shortly answered Durand, turning his back upon him.

Verney whistled to himself and went out. Under the lofty archway he met a shabbily-dressed, depressed-looking man, with a roll of paper under his arm. He obsequiously took off his hat to Verney.

"I believe I have the honor of addressing Monsieur Dorrien?"

"Your business is with him?" said Verney, composedly. "Well, monsieur, how can I assist you?"

The man's face brightened, and his depressed eyes took an eager look.

"I am an inventor, monsieur," he said, "and I have here a new paper, which can make the fortune of any house."

"Show it to me" coolly said Verney, stretching out his hand for the roll of paper; but even as the inventor was in the act of slipping off the string that tied it up, John Dorrien appeared. "That is Monsieur Dorrien," said the unabashed Verney, walking out into the street, while the inventor looked bewildered and amazed; but though it took a little time to enlighten him concerning his mistake, he discovered it at length, and explained his errand.

John Dorrien never threw away a chance. A year before this he had detected in a thin youth in a blouse, with feet through his shoes, the talent of Verney, turned it into the only channel that could suit La Maison Dorrien, and by a splendid salary secured the exclusive possession of what Monsieur Verney was pleased to call his genius. It had been a good thing for La Maison Dorrien, but it had been a better one for Monsieur Verney himself, though he did not choose to confess it, but grumbled that these Dorriens were living on his brains, and rolled in their carriages, or rode their thorough-breds, while he hired his wretched hacks, and that even only now and then. John Dorrien, as we said, never threw a chance away; inventors came to him daily, but he never dismissed one unheard.

"Please to come here with me," he said, leading his visitor across the court to the library. There they both sat down, and the inventor opened his roll of papers and displayed its contents.

"Sir," said he, with the sad, wearisome earnestness of all such men, "it is a wonderful invention, and it will make your fortune, if you are wise. I have spent a lifetime in perfecting this paper, and a little fortune in getting it manufactured; but now that I have it with a patent, I cannot dispose of it; and, monsieur, I am getting old, and I am very wearied. I want rest and comfort, and I will part with the patent for a moderate sum."

"I understand," replied John Dorrien, gently, for use had not yet blunted the kindness he could not help feeling for such men, so earnest, so tired, so heart-sick, so wearied —"I understand, but let us see the paper first."

He took it up, and was amazed at its beauty. It was only note-paper, but of the richest and the finest quality. The inventor looked at him with glistening eyes. He could not keep silent.

"Well, monsieur, he said, "you see what it is—cream-laid, vellum, all in one. I call it papyrus. It will rival the finest English paper, and in my opinion surpass it. There is nothing like it in this country."

"It is very good," said John Dorrien—"very beautiful and good. But what does it cost? In plain speech, what profit can it yield?"

"It is cheap—quite cheap," said the inventor, eagerly. "I have all the figures, all the bills here;" and in a trice a bundle of papers was brought out. John Dorrien checked him.

"I have no time now," he said, quietly; "but if you can come to-morrow morning at eight, I shall be able to enter on this matter with you."

Reluctantly the inventor took up his papers. He tried, indeed, to persuade monsieur to hear him now, and it was only by blank refusal that John Dorrien won his liberty. Scarcely had the door closed upon him when it opened again, and Monsieur Durand entered. Monsieur Durand had come to ask monsieur if his cousin could call at four that afternoon.

"You mean about that clerk's situation?" said John Dorrien. "Yes, he may come, Durand, but he will not do. We want an older man; a boy of sixteen cannot suit us. Still I will give him a hearing; but you know my opinion on the subject."

"I will take him under my own care if need be," said Durand, eagerly.

"You are not always within, or at leisure," answered John, a little coldly.

Durand made no reply, but withdrew. John remained alone, and, as he thought, at leisure; but he was mistaken.

"All I want to know is this," said a well-known voice from the depths of an arm-chair, which stood, half-hidden, near the heavy window-curtain: "John Dorrien, are you a prime-minister, or are you not?"

The voice was well known, but it had not been heard for years, and John Dorrien could not repress a start on being thus addressed. At once his look sought the arm-chair, and there discovered the handsome, laughing face of Oliver Blackmore.

"You!" he cried, with sparkling eyes—"you, Oliver?" he added, with a hearty welcome.

"Yes, my dear boy, it is I—I, just wakened from a most refreshing nap. When I came an hour ago, you were with Verney—who is Verney?—and I came here and waited, and fell asleep; then I woke, to find you discussing inventions. I took another nap, foreseeing you would be long about it; then I woke again, and, lo! you are rejecting candidates and granting situations; and so I show myself and claim my turn."

"And you have, and shall keep it," said John Dorrien, heartily. "Well, Oliver Blackmore, how have you been all these years?"

He looked kindly at his old friend. Oliver was little altered. A silky black beard scarcely marred the early boyish beauty of his handsome face. His person had acquired strength and grace, and the very mourning which he wore—Mr. Blackmore had not been long dead, as John knew—added to his interesting appearance. He was still the fascinating Oliver whom old and young, rich and poor, all liked with intuitive, unreasoning liking. John's question he now answered composedly.

"Oliver Blackmore is dead. Do not start, my dear boy; I mean, that such a person exists no more—or, if you like it better, never existed, unless by courtesy."

The sensitive face of John Dorrien colored up; in a mo-

ment he divined all. Oliver Blackmore was not, according to law, the son of the man who had reared him.

"Never mind, old fellow," said Oliver, with a careless but rather dreary laugh. "I suppose it will make no difference to you; and even if it did, I must bear it. But I am Oliver Black now; I have dropped the 'more,' so as not to lead to awkward mistakes—for there is a rightful Oliver Blackmore—the late Mr. Blackmore's heir. He behaved very fairly—gave me five hundred pounds, when he need not have given me a shilling, but hinted that I had better alter my surname, so I took Black. Any other name would have done me as well, but I had got used to the O. B. on my pocket-handkerchiefs, and at the end of my letters, and so I am Oliver Black, Esquire. My poor old dad! What a handsome old boy he was! He meant kindly by me, but he had no time. He has left me neither house nor land, nor gold nor silver, nor name. Yet, if ever I can, I will buy back La Maison Rouge, for his sake. Mr. Oliver Blackmore does not care about the place, and means to sell it. And now, my dear fellow, that you know all this, just give me a plain answer to a plain question. You seem to have a very fair berth of it here. Is your boat large enough to take me in? Can I have an oar in it? In plain speech, would that clerk's situation, which I heard asked of you a while back, do for me?"

"For you, Oliver!" said John, with some emphasis.

"My dear fellow, I entreat that you will have no false shame about it. Forget that Oliver Blackmore, son and heir of James Blackmore, ever existed. He is dead, I tell you, dead and buried, and Oliver Black is ready to turn an honest penny the best way he can. Come, shall I reckon up his accomplishments? A tolerable person, and gentlemanlike address; but *that*, perhaps, is not a recommendation; four languages, two of which he possesses fluently, a good arithmetician, tolerably shrewd, and not easily taken in. Surely, when I add that the first year's salary is no object, you can give me a trial."

"You mean that you can give this thing a trial?" said John. "I do not think, Oliver, that you can realize it."

"I do not think, my dear boy, that you can realize what it is to fall from *une jolie position* to no position at all. It has a most soberizing, chastening influence on the spirit."

"Still I cannot fancy you on a high stool at a desk," said John, positively. "You must not think of it, Oliver."

"You will drive me to despair!" cried Oliver, raising his hands. "I assure you that a high stool—the loftier the better—is just now the summit of my ambition. Besides," added Oliver, in a tone between jest and earnest, "have I not told you that I am to buy back La Maison Rouge? And do you not understand that the ambition which aspires to the purchase of a Norman château must needs stoop, if it would take so sure a spring?"

"No," decisively said John, who had acquired the habit of peremptory speech, "that must not be; but I have something else that may do. We have been establishing depots all over France, in order to get the retail business into our hands, only I have a strong fancy that some of our agents are not quite sound. I had some thoughts of giving them a look, but I think that, after a few conversations with me, you can manage that matter."

Oliver looked at him with his soft black eyes, and was silent a while.

"And this is your gift?" he said, at length. "Are you a partner, John?"

John Dorrien smiled.

"I am not a partner," he answered, "but I am a Dorrien, and, so, though I am legally nothing, I am practically every thing in the house. As a matter of form I always consult Mr. Dorrien, who always approves whatever I suggest. Come and dine with us this evening at seven. I shall have spoken to him, and you will find it all settled. I mean, if it suits you."

"If!" echoed Oliver, with marked emphasis. "Of course it does, you lucky heir-apparent, for, of course, too, there is no one between you and the Dorrien inheritance."

"Mr. Dorrien has a granddaughter," a little dryly replied John.

Oliver whistled.

"And you are not a partner?" he said. "My dear John, take the advice of a friend, secure the partnership. But, by-the-by, is the heiress young and pretty?"

"I have not seen her since she was a child."

"Ah! well, heiresses are always young and pretty!" rejoined Oliver, coolly, "and I see a matrimonial alliance

looming in the distance. Well, well, I also see that you have no more time to spare. Seven, did you say? Of course I must be punctual?"

"Mr. Dorrien would not delay his dinner five minutes for a prince," said John, quietly.

"And a disinherited prince has no right to keep any one waiting," was Oliver's philosophic comment. "Please tell Mr. Dorrien about the change of name," he added, as they parted, and he stood on the door-step drawing on his gloves. "It is so horribly awkward having to tell that sort of thing one's self! What a curious old place of yours this is, John! Venerable and imposing, but not cheerful, yet I suppose you see a few human beings in it."

"Not many," candidly answered John. "The Dorriens have never been sociable. Mr. Dorrien has bad health, and I have no time."

"A monk in a cloister—money your divinity," said Oliver. "And what of 'Miriam?' I beg your pardon," he added, as John started and colored. "I forgot that was a secret; but I once overheard you and Ryan in Saint-Ives —how you two did go on, to be sure!—and I wondered if you kept it on. Of course, I ought to have known better; all that is done for now. You will not forget about the Black instead of Blackmore, if you please."

Rather gravely John promised to tell Mr. Dorrien all that was needful, and for a moment he stood and watched Oliver, as the young man crossed the court, and went into the street through the great open gate.

"Then I was not mistaken," he thought. "I felt long ago that he knew it; and I was not mistaken, he did know about 'Miriam.' Well, it does not matter now. As he says, all that is done for." He turned back into the library and looked at his watch. It was only one. He had actually a quarter of an hour to spare, fifteen precious minutes to snatch from the greedy fingers of Time, his pitiless task-master. He stretched out his hand toward one of the book-shelves, he took down a volume, then he placed it back unopened, and went up to his mother's sitting-room.

That room, since John had become a great man in the firm, was no longer on the second floor, but on the first. It no longer overlooked the dull court, but the pleasant

garden. Mrs. Dorrien, who was now an habitual invalid, rarely left it, unless in unexceptionable weather. Day after day she sat sewing, often alone, often, too, cheered by Mrs. Reginald's company. The two ladies were together when John came in upon them. The warm sunshine pouring in through the window showed him Mrs. Dorrien, pale and wearied, in her chair, and Mrs. Reginald, brown and energetic, standing by her, and looking down at her with her arms folded, and her head on one side.

"I tell you it is only bile, my dear," she was saying; "and if you could get rid of that bile—"

"My dear, you refer every thing to bile," interrupted John's mother. "When Madame Basnage died, you said—"

"It was biliousness," interrupted Mrs. Reginald, in her turn; "and so it was—she lived upon *pâté de foie gras*, and it stands to reason that, this being the diseased liver of a fowl—" Here she became aware of John's entrance, and the two ladies greeted the young man with a warmth which showed how dear he was to both.

"O John, how nice of you to come!" said his mother, her pale face lighting up at his aspect.

"There's a good boy," emphatically said Mrs. Reginald, whom time had scarcely altered. She was a little thinner, a little older than when we saw her last, but her brown eye was as keen, and her deep voice as kind and as hearty as ever.

"Yes, of course I am a good boy," answered John, sitting down between the two, "for I have been providing you with a guest, Mrs. Reginald—my old friend Oliver is to dine with us this evening."

"Oliver?" cried Mrs. Dorrien, with sudden interest. "Oh! how is he, John? He lost his father some time ago, did he not?"

"He lost his father, his name, his position, and his fortune," answered John. "He is no longer Oliver Blackmore, but Oliver Black, and, having to earn his bread, he will probably become one of us."

Mrs. Dorrien was all amazement, consternation, and perplexity. John had to explain. He did so briefly enough, but quite plainly.

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Mrs. Dorrien, folding her hands and shaking her head slowly. "Poor Oliver!—and

do you really think you can get him into the firm, John? Suppose Mr. Dorrien should object?"

John laughed.

"Why, little mother," said he, "you will not understand that I have more power than Mr. Dorrien himself."

"Then why are you not a partner?" asked Mrs. Dorrien, looking injured.

"Where is the need?" retorted John.

Mrs. Reginald held up her forefinger.

"John," said she, "be a partner if you can."

John laughed again. He was amused at the coincidence of the advice with that of Oliver.

"What would you say, both of you," said he, "if I were to tell you the substance of a conversation Mr. Dorrien and I had together yesterday evening?"

"Tell us all about it, John!" cried Mrs. Reginald, with a sparkle in her eye; "and don't give us the substance, which is just the skeleton, but the real flesh and blood, and not a mere pack of bones."

John shook his head.

"I have only a few minutes, Mrs. Reginald, I must condense. What Mr. Dorrien said was this: 'John, it is time that you should have your proper position in the business. It will give us both more weight. You ought to be a partner—Monsieur Basnage was saying something about it only the other day.'"

"I am so glad," murmured Mrs. Dorrien, with a sigh of relief.

"Go on," said Mrs. Reginald. "When is it to be, John?"

"When I marry," answered John, smiling—"that is Mr. Dorrien's only condition."

The two ladies exchanged significant glances, then looked very blank.

"What! marry that foolish little vixen who flew like a fury at her aunt?" said Mrs. Reginald in her deep voice—"nonsense!"

"What a pity Mr. Dorrien ever took such a fancy into his head!" exclaimed John's mother, looking at him anxiously. "He is right in wishing you to marry, John, only I wish it were some one else."

John smiled, but spoke not.

"Ah! if it were Mademoiselle Basnage," regretfully continued Mrs. Dorrien; "such a sweet girl, John, and so rich! a million francs for her *dot!*"

She sighed as she said it, for of course Mademoiselle Basnage was out of the question.

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Reginald, "a little curly Parisian doll, John, only—"

"I must go," said John, rising, "my time is out. You will not forget, little mother, not to call Oliver by the name of Blackmore, if you can join us. It is a severe trial to him."

It was a trial, but his troubles sat more lightly on Oliver than John Dorrien thought. There is a certain hardness which lies hidden in some easy, pleasant natures, even as the stone is the very heart of a luscious fruit. On parting from his friend, Mr. Black, since such was his name, hailed a cab and drove down the boulevards. On reaching the fashionable regions he alighted, entered a *café* all mirrors and frescoes; sat, smoked a cigar, looked into *Figaro*, gazed out dreamily at the bright changing scene before him, and sipped something out of a glass every now and then. Beau Brummel had once eaten a pea, and Oliver Black, who had a horror of drinking, pleasantly confessed that he had done so once or twice in the course of his existence. He thus spent a fair portion of the afternoon, then went home to his quiet hotel, Rue du Luxembourg, wrote a few letters, dressed for dinner, and entered the Hôtel Dorrien at a quarter to seven.

Oliver Black was not shown to the great drawing-room on the first-floor. The dining-room was on the ground-floor of the house; it overlooked the garden, and its two tall windows afforded a pleasant prospect of the graveled alleys, tall trees, and old river-god of that green inclosure. It was preceded by a sitting-room, simply but handsomely furnished, where Mr. Dorrien's family always met for a few minutes before going in to dinner. Two large mirrors gave the room depth and brightness; and the water-colors on the walls, rich views of Venice, in all the dying glory of her magic sunsets, of her rose-colored palaces, and white-marble churches, made it a room very pleasant to the eye. No door divided it from the drawing-room. Heavy crimson-velvet hangings closed it in when the weather was cold,

but they were oftener drawn apart, and it was decidedly pleasant to sit in that room and look at the next—to see by the light of the chandelier a bright, cheerful table laid out with all that shining old plate, sparkling crystal, white damask, and fresh flowers, can add of luxurious comfort to man's "daily bread."

In this room, on which he bestowed a quiet but approving look, Oliver Black was welcomed by John Dorrien, and introduced to the master of the house, by whom he was graciously received, but simply as a guest, and without any reference to business. Mr. Brown, too, was present, quiet and collected as usual, and Mrs. Reginald in her stiff silk. She surveyed Oliver Black from head to foot attentively, though rapidly; then withdrew from the handsome and pleasing face of the young man with a perplexed meaning on her countenance, which amused John Dorrien. He knew that it was Mrs. Reginald's habit to come to prompt and irrevocable conclusions concerning faces, and it was evident that Oliver's baffled her.

"Your poor mother is too unwell to come down," she said, turning to John, who expressed his regret. "Poor dear!" compassionately continued Mrs. Reginald. She had in some sort adopted Mrs. Dorrien and took her ailments—and they, alas! were many—to heart, as if they were a child's. "But she must eat," she persisted, "she must have some chicken."

Oliver Black, talking to Mr. Dorrien, gave a guilty start as he overheard this *aparté*. He had forgotten Mrs. Dorrien's existence, and, of course, never mentioned her to John; but Oliver was never at a loss for a plausible excuse, and, before five minutes were over, he had skillfully explained to his friend the cause of his silence. Three years ago he had heard that John had lost his dear mother through a most painful accident, and thus he had shrunk from mentioning the name of Mrs. Dorrien, concerning whose health he now inquired with evident sympathy. If John was not deceived, he at least betrayed no skepticism; but Mrs. Reginald, turning right round on her chair, as if she were moving on a pivot, fastened her brown eye full on Oliver Black's handsome face, and said, point-blank:

"What accident did you say, Mr. Black?"

"A railway accident," answered Oliver, in a subdued

tone, and as if he shrank from the imaginary injuries a fallacious report had inflicted on Mrs. Dorrien.

Mrs. Reginald sniffed indignantly.

"A railway accident, indeed! As if the poor dear were in a state to go gadding about! And pray, sir," with another boring look at Oliver, "who may have told you this precious cock-and-bull story about Mrs. John?"

"Mrs. Septimus Longford. Do you know her?"

"No, sir, do you?" retorted Mrs. Reginald, with what she considered cutting irony.

"Very slightly," answered Oliver, with his low, pleasant laugh.

"The more's the pity," said Mrs. Reginald, raising her voice as she rose and shook out her stiff silk skirts, "for I should have liked you to give her a message from me concerning her veracity. The idea of representing poor Mrs. John, who does not leave her room from one week's end to another, as being in a railway-carriage at all! Mrs. Longford, indeed! Mrs. Longbow, I say."

"But, my dear madam, I do not think I should have delivered your message," replied Oliver, giving her his arm to take her in to dinner. "I never deliver unpleasant messages, to ladies especially."

This was said as suavely as if Mrs. Reginald had been the youngest and fairest of her sex, but it did not mollify the displeasure and mistrust which Oliver's unfortunate white lie had roused within that lady's breast. In vain he was courteous, refined, and charming, during the whole of dinner-time; in vain he was as attentive to her as if his fate in the firm hung on her breath—nothing could soften Mrs. Reginald. War was declared by her on this first evening of her acquaintance with John's friend, and with Mrs. Reginald war, once begun, generally meant war to the end of the chapter.

In the course of the evening Mr. Dorrien gracefully expressed to Mr. Black his approbation of the suggestion made by Mr. John Dorrien, with whom, in the same languid, graceful way, he left him to settle business particulars. Oliver bowed, and expressed his acknowledgments after the same quiet fashion, and no more was said till he left. This was early, for the young man was quick to *detect the signs* of weariness on Mr. Dorrien's face, and to

set him at liberty. His tact was rewarded by that gentleman's unqualified approbation, expressed to Mr. Brown almost as soon as the door closed upon the two young men, John having volunteered to walk down the boulevards with his friend.

"I think, Mr. Brown, that we may congratulate Mr. John Dorrien on this friend of his," said he. "I feel sure he is the very sort of person we have been wanting all this time."

"Mr. John's choice of individuals is always good," said Mr. Brown.

Mrs. Reginald sniffed rather indignantly on hearing this, but she never made any comment on business in Mr. Dorrien's presence, and she kept her opinion of John's friend for Mrs. Dorrien, with whom she went and sat, as usual, for a few minutes before going to bed. She found Mrs. Dorrien pale, sad, and dull, but ready to brighten up at her aspect.

"Well, dear, and how are you?" she asked, in her kind, cheery voice, sitting down opposite to her friend, in order to take a survey of her as she said it.

"Ever so much better for your coming, dear," replied Mrs. Dorrien, who was not given to complain.

"Of course you are; but did you eat any chicken?"

"A little, thank you."

"I don't like 'a little.' He is a mean, pitiful sneak—have nothing to do with him, dear."

Mrs. Dorrien smiled, and asked how she liked John's friend. Whereupon Mrs. Reginald tossed her head, and answered briefly:

"I don't like him, Mrs. John."

"Don't you? Why so, dear?"

"I don't like him," reiterated Mrs. Reginald, staring hard at a picture on the wall.

"John says that he is so amiable," said Mrs. John.

"I don' like him at all," persisted Mrs. Reginald, looking up at the ceiling, as if firmly resolved never to utter the cause of her dislike. Her manner made Mrs. Dorrien uneasy. She put more questions. Did Mr. Dorrien like Mr. Black? Oh! yes, very much so. And was he, Mr. Black, going to join the business? Yes, Mr. Black was going to be something or other in the firm, replied Mrs.

Reginald, tightening her lips, as if she chose to make no further comment.

"But what is it that you do dislike in him, dear?" asked Mrs. John, in her most persuasive tones. "You cannot dislike him without a cause."

"Well, I don't like his ears, to begin with," candidly replied Mrs. Reginald. "Of course you think that is nonsense, but I always go by something or other in my likes and dislikes. With some it is eyes. I fell in love at once with dear John's. With others it is hands or feet, and with Mr. Black it is his ears. You may laugh, but I know what I am saying."

"Well, dear, and what are his ears like?" asked Mrs. Dorrien, much amused.

"Oh! there is nothing particular in their make or color, but I don't like the way they are set in his head. He caught me looking at them, and tried to hide them by thrusting his long white fingers through his hair, but it would not do. They would stick up. And I don't like him, and there's an end of it, my dear."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Time had its full value in La Maison Dorrien. Two days after that on which he had sat at Mr. Dorrien's table, Oliver Black was gone to the west and south of France. He spent five weeks in the investigation that had been committed to his care, and carried it out with so much shrewdness, tact, and skill, as to rouse even languid Mr. Dorrien into admiration, and cool Mr. Brown into surprise. John was charmed, Mrs. Dorrien pleased to think that her son had once more evinced his judgment, and every one satisfied, with the exception of Mrs. Reginald, who steadily adhered to her dislike and disapprobation of the newcomer.

"I don't like him, you know," was all *when challenged* on the subject.

"*And now* what will you

asked Oliver of his friend. "You cannot send me about investigating forever, can you?"

"Never fear but we shall find work for you in La Maison Dorrien, old fellow," answered John, heartily. "Suppose we send you to America next, and let you try your luck with the Yankees? New York is to be one of our strongholds, I hope."

"I shall like it, of all things," cried Oliver, looking delighted. "And I declare, John," he added, wringing his hand cordially, "you are one of the best fellows in the world. I am sure I don't know what I should have done without you," he cordially added, "and I will reward you with a piece of advice: secure the partnership, make your hay while the sun shines, my dear boy."

"I bide my time," answered John.

"All wrong, my good fellow! No time like the present! Suppose Mr. Dorrien should not always be as amiable as he is now—"

"Suppose Mr. Dorrien has long found out that he cannot do without me?" interrupted John, smiling.

"My excellent friend, you are awfully conceited, for a modest young fellow," said Oliver, gayly; "but I suppose you know La Maison Dorrien, which is a very delightful, liberal house, so far as I am concerned!"

"So far as every one is concerned," interrupted John. "You have not been favored, Oliver."

"Yes, I have," persisted Oliver. "If not in money, at least in courtesy and kindness, most certainly. Don't tell me that Mr. Dorrien's manner to all his employés is the same as it is to me. I tell you honestly that I would not believe you. Mr. Brown, too, is unexceptionable. Mrs. Dorrien is kindness itself. There's only Mrs. Reginald; poor, dear, one-[illegible] lady, how she [illegible]ts me! Now, John, do tell [illegible] who are in h[illegible] graces, how I co[illegible]

You will tell me to-morrow how far I have been successful."

But Mr. Oliver Black was not to have the benefit of John Dorrien's opinion on that evening's transactions; for though Mrs. Dorrien was well enough to be present at the dinner-table, her son, to Oliver's surprise, did not appear. No one, however, alluded to his absence; it was evidently a matter of course, that required and received no comment. The dinner was silent, formal, and dull. Oliver tried to enliven it now and then, but Mrs. Dorrien's faint smile and Mrs. Reginald's grim silence were not encouraging, and although Mr. Dorrien's cook was an artist, and though his wines were perfect, Oliver sincerely regretted his less luxurious meal in the Palais Royal, with its sparkling lights and gay aspect, and, above all, its pleasant sense of liberty.

"I really do not think I must favor Mr. Dorrien often with my company," he thought, scarcely repressing a yawn of weariness. "It was too bad of John not to tell me he was not to be present."

John's absence was a drawback; but, though Oliver liked his friend's company, he might not have felt Mr. Dorrien's dinner so great an ordeal but for Mrs. Reginald. That lady's enmity was evidently growing stronger and deeper every time they met. In vain Oliver did his best to please; he was repelled with something very like virulence, and his civil speeches were received with withering contempt.

Mrs. Reginald had been taking an interest in a poor young Englishman, and had recommended him to John Dorrien's attention. He had, in his turn, devolved part of his duty on Oliver, and it was now the young man's turn to give Mrs. Reginald an account of what had been done for her *protégé*. He did so in his graceful, pleasant way, adding at the close of his speech—"And I assure you, Mrs. Reginald, that when this poor fellow knew it was to you he owed all this, his joy was really doubled."

Now, this speech might be a little too flowery, but really, when you consider how many thorns and nettles grow along the path of life, and how many unkind people are ever ready to pick them for you and thrust them under your *very nose, ought* one to be so severe with those amiable

creatures who scatter a few superfluous blossoms about, and say all sorts of pretty things, in which they don't happen to believe at all? Surely not! But alas for Oliver Black's well-meant bit of flattery! Mrs. Reginald looked at him askance, and grimly replied:

"That's humbug, Mr. Black."

At this awful comment Mr. Dorrien gave a start of amazement, on which a look of profound disgust followed. Mrs. Reginald's blunt, idiomatic English was often distasteful to him, but this particular expression of "humbug" was one which he specially detested. Mrs. Dorrien was distressed, and tried vainly not to seem so; even Mr. Brown showed slight signs of disturbance; but Oliver Black, pleasant, unmoved, and courteous, bowed low to the lady. To all appearance he was unaffected by the strange, rude taunt he had received; at heart he was not so. Silently he picked up the glove which Mrs. Reginald so persistently and so defiantly flung at him, and from that time forth the war between these two was no pretense, as such wars sometimes are—no tilt and tournament *avec armes courtoises*, but real fighting, in which, if blood was not shed, it was because the combatants had not the proper weapons.

The unpleasant silence which followed Mrs. Reginald's unmitigated comment was broken by the entrance of a servant, who brought in a note for Mr. Dorrien.

"Any thing I can attend to sir?" asked Mr. Brown, looking at Mr. Dorrien.

"Oh, no, thank you, Mr. Brown," answered his master; and, with a brief excuse, he rose and left the room.

The dinner was over, and the dessert (a choice one, as usual) was on the table.

"Now, Mr. Brown," said Mrs. Reginald, turning to that gentleman, "you heard how Mr. Dorrien commended us to your care; so please to make us happy."

"I wish Mr. John Dorrien were here to do it, Mrs. Reginald," answered Mr. Brown, trying to look pleasant and cheerful. "He is a young man—and you like young men, Mrs. Reginald."

"I do," heartily replied that lady.

"Do you, really, Mrs. Reginald?" remarked Oliver, with his pleasant look. "I wonder why?"

He was raising his glass and leaning back in his chair,

he looked through the ruby liquid as if he were thinking, "What has *she* to do with young men?"

"I like young men," repeated Mrs. Reginald, ignoring his question; "they are plump, as a rule, and they would do so well for pinching!"

Oliver Black put down his glass as if he felt Mrs. Reginald's hard fingers in his flesh. He had strong, calm nerves, but this lady could disturb them.

"Why not young ladies, Mrs. Reginald?" he asked, trying to laugh.

"Oh! they are birds, Mr. Black," she condescended to reply—"all clothes and feathers."

"Or little children?" he suggested.

Mrs. Reginald's brown eye flashed.

"I never had a child," she said, irefully, "but I could have killed the man, or the woman either, who would have tried to harm my child, harm my boy! Let them, that's all!"

"Oh! then it was to have been a boy?" said Oliver, catching at the word. He saw that he had found the weak place in Mrs. Reginald's armor, and he mercilessly thrust his sword in to the hilt. "And what was he to have been like, Mrs. Reginald? Dark and tall?"

She was silent.

"Then, I see, he should have been fair and slender?"

Mrs. Reginald tightened her lips.

"Now, my dear madam, pray do let us hear something about that paragon. What was he to have been?—A genius, of course.—The Dorriens are geniuses by right of birth.—I wish you would not be so cruelly silent. I feel quite an interest in that young man. He was to have been so—"

"*So true*," replied Mrs. Reginald, turning upon him with a look that measured the whole man.

Oliver laughed, but his color deepened.

"I am so sorry I could not attend to that business for Mr. Dorrien," said Mr. Brown, raising his voice.

"Why so?" retorted Mrs. Reginald. "I think we get on very well without him," she added, glancing round the table in grim triumph; "and I dare say he does not miss us."

Mr. Dorrien, to say the truth, did not miss Mrs. Regi-

nald. He had been glad to escape from her presence and repair to the library, where John sat waiting for him.

"I am afraid you have hurried out to me, sir," said the young man, rising to address his cousin with the courtesy and respect habitual to him; "yet I said there was plenty of time."

"I was only too glad to get away," answered Mr. Dorrien, throwing himself down in an arm-chair with a look of disgust and weariness. "Mrs. Reginald has taken a dislike to Mr. Black, and quite forgets that she is a Dorrien by marriage, if not by birth; but we will not talk of all this. —What has happened?—What brings you back, John?—Did you miss the train?"

"Nothing has happened," answered John Dorrien, "and, to say the truth, I missed the train on purpose."

Mr. Dorrien rarely questioned. He knew that when people have something to say, they do say it without your taking that trouble; so he sat and waited.

"I thought," resumed John, "that it was not quite fair and honest in me not to tell you my real reason for taking this journey myself instead of asking Black, who has been so successful, to see to this business, in my stead."

"Well, I did wonder at it," replied Mr. Dorrien; "but this matter is so much more important than the other, that I did think you might not care to trust Mr. Black so far."

"Oliver Black may be trusted much farther," quickly answered John.

"We do not know much about him," retorted Mr. Dorrien. "Of course you think well of him—as to that, so do I; but a young man who was reared in wealth, and never tried, is always open to doubt."

"Yes, sir; but allow me to say that Oliver Black, apart from principle or honesty, has too much judgment to fall into the vulgar temptations which beset young men in positions of great trust. However, he has nothing to do with my coming back this evening."

A faint gleam of curiosity shone in Mr. Dorrien's blue eyes, but still he did not speak. He disliked the fatigue of it, for one thing; and then he read slight signs of embarrassment in John Dorrien's face, and it rather amused him. He liked his young cousin very well, but perhaps he

wanted him too sorely to like him much, and he was not sorry to find him at a disadvantage.

"You were speaking of marriage to me the other day," resumed John. "I have been thinking over what you said, and I agree with you, sir. I think it would be well if I were to marry; and if matters were brought to a final settlement between us."

"Of course it would," replied Mr. Dorrien, with sudden interest; "and let me tell you, John, that Mademoiselle Basnage is not merely rich, but pretty."

John raised his eyes to his cousin's in wonder and doubt.

"Then it was not Miss Dorrien that you alluded to the other evening when we spoke of this," said he.

"To my granddaughter?—oh! no," replied Mr. Dorrien, almost coldly.

There was a brief pause.

"I confess it was of her I thought," said John; "and my reason for taking this journey was that I wished to see her before matters went further. I have to go to Marseilles; thence I shall go on to Nice, and see Miss Dorrien. I have no intention of calling upon her. I only wish to see her."

"And could you really not go and look at a young lady without coming back to ask my leave, John?" remarked Mr. Dorrien, with his smooth irony.

"I did not come back to ask your leave," replied John, smiling, "but to tell you what I intended doing. It did not seem frank and honest in me to take this liberty with a young lady so nearly related to you without your knowledge."

"Very nice and honorable," murmured Mr. Dorrien, approvingly; "but that you always are, John. Well, seven years ago I did think that such an arrangement might be desirable, and I had the child here that she might be brought up with you; but it did not answer. And there are other objections. You see, John, we are getting on very well, I grant, but we are often hemmed in for want of capital; and I cannot help thinking that, as a man of business, you ought not to marry a poor girl. Miss Dorrien has nothing, and can have nothing, that does not come *from the business*. Mademoiselle Basnage would bring us

her father's help and forty thousand pounds—a million francs, John," added Mr. Dorrien, emphatically.

"We might have to pay dear for both," replied John, a little dryly.

"I grant that the father-in-law is objectionable, so was Madame Basnage, poor lady, but I have seen the daughter, and you may take my word for it, John, *she* is charming, pretty, modest, and accomplished. I wish you had seen her."

"I can take your word, sir," said John, quietly. "You are a good judge, and a critical one, but you must allow me to make two objections: Monsieur Basnage is a meddlesome, domineering man; is it desirable that he should know too much of our business, or have any right to interfere in it? Besides, I have not given up my old fancy. We must end by manufacturing our paper, and in that case Monsieur Basnage would be in the way. We are better without him and his forty thousand pounds, if they are bought at the price of liberty."

"Then you still think of that, John?" impatiently said Mr. Dorrien. "You are very willful."

"We are a willful race, I believe. And that papyrus, as the inventor calls it, would be the very thing for us, if we could secure the patent. I really think it a fine thing. But apart from all this, if our business be worth any thing—and I believe it to be in a fair way of becoming prosperous—why should your granddaughter, a Dorrien in blood and name, be excluded from its prosperity? Capital is too precious in our case to be withdrawn in her favor; but comfort, luxury, and ultimate wealth, may be hers if the arrangement you contemplated seven years ago be carried out now."

Mr. Dorrien stroked his chin, and looked half annoyed and half perplexed.

"All that is very specious, John," he said, rather dryly; "but suppose that, when matters come to a crisis, you do not care for Miss Dorrien, or that she does not care for you?"

"The risk must be run in any case," answered John, promptly. "The objection holds good with Mademoiselle Basnage, as well as with Miss Dorrien."

"But you would like to begin with Miss Dorrien," an-

tone, and as if he shrank from the imaginary injuries a fallacious report had inflicted on Mrs. Dorrien.

Mrs. Reginald sniffed indignantly.

"A railway accident, indeed! As if the poor dear were in a state to go gadding about! And pray, sir," with another boring look at Oliver, "who may have told you this precious cock-and-bull story about Mrs. John?"

"Mrs. Septimus Longford. Do you know her?"

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"Well, dear, and how are you?" she asked, in her kind, cheery voice, sitting down opposite to her friend, in order to take a survey of her as she said it.

"Ever so much better for your coming, dear," replied Mrs. Dorrien, who was not given to complain.

"Of course you are; but did you eat any chicken?"

"A little, thank you."

"I don't like 'a little.' He is a mean, pitiful sneak—have nothing to do with him, dear."

Mrs. Dorrien smiled, and asked how she liked John's friend. Whereupon Mrs. Reginald tossed her head, and answered briefly:

"I don't like him, Mrs. John."

"Don't you? Why so, dear?"

"I don't like him," reiterated Mrs. Reginald, staring hard at a picture on the wall.

"John says that he is so amiable," said Mrs. John.

"I don' like him at all," persisted Mrs. Reginald, looking up at the ceiling, as if firmly resolved never to utter the cause of her dislike. Her manner made Mrs. Dorrien uneasy. She put more questions. Did Mr. Dorrien like Mr. Black? Oh! yes, very much so. And was he, Mr. Black, going to join the business? Yes, Mr. Black was going to be something or other in the firm, replied Mrs.

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"Oh! there is nothing particular in their make or color, but I don't like the way they are set in his head. He caught me looking at them, and tried to hide them by thrusting his long white fingers through his hair, but it would not do. They would stick up. And I don't like him, and there's an end of it, my dear."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Time had its full value in La Maison Dorrien. Two days after that on which he had sat at Mr. Dorrien's table, Oliver Black was gone to the west and south of France. He spent five weeks in the investigation that had been committed to his care, and carried it out with so much shrewdness, tact, and skill, as to rouse even languid Mr. Dorrien into admiration, and cool Mr. Brown into surprise. John was charmed, Mrs. Dorrien pleased to think that her son had once more evinced his judgment, and every one satisfied, with the exception of Mrs. Reginald, who steadily adhered to her dislike and disapprobation of the newcomer.

"I don't like him, you know," was all she cared to say, when challenged on the subject.

"And now what will you do with me?" laughingly

asked Oliver of his friend. "You cannot send me about investigating forever, can you?"

"Never fear but we shall find work for you in La Maison Dorrien, old fellow," answered John, heartily. "Suppose we send you to America next, and let you try your luck with the Yankees? New York is to be one of our strongholds, I hope."

"I shall like it, of all things," cried Oliver, looking delighted. "And I declare, John," he added, wringing his hand cordially, "you are one of the best fellows in the world. I am sure I don't know what I should have done without you," he cordially added, "and I will reward you with a piece of advice: secure the partnership, make your hay while the sun shines, my dear boy."

"I bide my time," answered John.

"All wrong, my good fellow! No time like the present! Suppose Mr. Dorrien should not always be as amiable as he is now—"

"Suppose Mr. Dorrien has long found out that he cannot do without me?" interrupted John, smiling.

"My excellent friend, you are awfully conceited, for a modest young fellow," said Oliver, gayly; "but I suppose you know La Maison Dorrien, which is a very delightful, liberal house, so far as I am concerned!"

"So far as every one is concerned," interrupted John. "You have not been favored, Oliver."

"Yes, I have," persisted Oliver. "If not in money, at least in courtesy and kindness, most certainly. Don't tell me that Mr. Dorrien's manner to all his employés is the same as it is to me. I tell you honestly that I would not believe you. Mr. Brown, too, is unexceptionable. Mrs. Dorrien is kindness itself. There's only Mrs. Reginald; poor, dear, one-eyed lady, how she detests me! Now, John, do tell me, you who are in her good graces, how I could secure them!"

But John shook his head, and honestly confessed that the secret of Mrs. Reginald's likes and dislikes was within her own keeping.

"A Doctor Fell affair, and therefore hopeless," said Oliver, trying to look despondent. "Well, Mr. Dorrien has kindly asked me to dinner this evening. I shall try my luck again, and, if I fail this time, give it up for good.

You will tell me to-morrow how far I have been successful."

But Mr. Oliver Black was not to have the benefit of John Dorrien's opinion on that evening's transactions; for though Mrs. Dorrien was well enough to be present at the dinner-table, her son, to Oliver's surprise, did not appear. No one, however, alluded to his absence; it was evidently a matter of course, that required and received no comment. The dinner was silent, formal, and dull. Oliver tried to enliven it now and then, but Mrs. Dorrien's faint smile and Mrs. Reginald's grim silence were not encouraging, and although Mr. Dorrien's cook was an artist, and though his wines were perfect, Oliver sincerely regretted his less luxurious meal in the Palais Royal, with its sparkling lights and gay aspect, and, above all, its pleasant sense of liberty.

"I really do not think I must favor Mr. Dorrien often with my company," he thought, scarcely repressing a yawn of weariness. "It was too bad of John not to tell me he was not to be present."

John's absence was a drawback; but, though Oliver liked his friend's company, he might not have felt Mr. Dorrien's dinner so great an ordeal but for Mrs. Reginald. That lady's enmity was evidently growing stronger and deeper every time they met. In vain Oliver did his best to please; he was repelled with something very like virulence, and his civil speeches were received with withering contempt.

Mrs. Reginald had been taking an interest in a poor young Englishman, and had recommended him to John Dorrien's attention. He had, in his turn, devolved part of his duty on Oliver, and it was now the young man's turn to give Mrs. Reginald an account of what had been done for her *protégé*. He did so in his graceful, pleasant way, adding at the close of his speech—"And I assure you, Mrs. Reginald, that when this poor fellow knew it was to you he owed all this, his joy was really doubled."

Now, this speech might be a little too flowery, but really, when you consider how many thorns and nettles grow along the path of life, and how many unkind people are ever ready to pick them for you and thrust them under your *very nose, ought* one to be so severe with those amiable

creatures who scatter a few superfluous blossoms about, and say all sorts of pretty things, in which they don't happen to believe at all? Surely not! But alas for Oliver Black's well-meant bit of flattery! Mrs. Reginald looked at him askance, and grimly replied:

"That's humbug, Mr. Black."

At this awful comment Mr. Dorrien gave a start of amazement, on which a look of profound disgust followed. Mrs. Reginald's blunt, idiomatic English was often distasteful to him, but this particular expression of "humbug" was one which he specially detested. Mrs. Dorrien was distressed, and tried vainly not to seem so; even Mr. Brown showed slight signs of disturbance; but Oliver Black, pleasant, unmoved, and courteous, bowed low to the lady. To all appearance he was unaffected by the strange, rude taunt he had received; at heart he was not so. Silently he picked up the glove which Mrs. Reginald so persistently and so defiantly flung at him, and from that time forth the war between these two was no pretense, as such wars sometimes are—no tilt and tournament *avec armes courtoises*, but real fighting, in which, if blood was not shed, it was because the combatants had not the proper weapons.

The unpleasant silence which followed Mrs. Reginald's unmitigated comment was broken by the entrance of a servant, who brought in a note for Mr. Dorrien.

"Any thing I can attend to sir?" asked Mr. Brown, looking at Mr. Dorrien.

"Oh, no, thank you, Mr. Brown," answered his master; and, with a brief excuse, he rose and left the room.

The dinner was over, and the dessert (a choice one, as usual) was on the table.

"Now, Mr. Brown," said Mrs. Reginald, turning to that gentleman, "you heard how Mr. Dorrien commended us to your care; so please to make us happy."

"I wish Mr. John Dorrien were here to do it, Mrs. Reginald," answered Mr. Brown, trying to look pleasant and cheerful. "He is a young man—and you like young men, Mrs. Reginald."

"I do," heartily replied that lady.

"Do you, really, Mrs. Reginald?" remarked Oliver, with his pleasant look. "I wonder why?"

He was raising his glass and leaning back in his chair,

he looked through the ruby liquid as if he were thinking, "What has *she* to do with young men?"

"I like young men," repeated Mrs. Reginald, ignoring his question; "they are plump, as a rule, and they would do so well for pinching!"

Oliver Black put down his glass as if he felt Mrs. Reginald's hard fingers in his flesh. He had strong, calm nerves, but this lady could disturb them.

"Why not young ladies, Mrs. Reginald?" he asked, trying to laugh.

"Oh! they are birds, Mr. Black," she condescended to reply—"all clothes and feathers."

"Or little children?" he suggested.

Mrs. Reginald's brown eye flashed.

"I never had a child," she said, irefully, "but I could have killed the man, or the woman either, who would have tried to harm my child, harm my boy! Let them, that's all!"

"Oh! then it was to have been a boy?" said Oliver, catching at the word. He saw that he had found the weak place in Mrs. Reginald's armor, and he mercilessly thrust his sword in to the hilt. "And what was he to have been like, Mrs. Reginald? Dark and tall?"

She was silent.

"Then, I see, he should have been fair and slender?"

Mrs. Reginald tightened her lips.

"Now, my dear madam, pray do let us hear something about that paragon. What was he to have been?—A genius, of course.—The Dorriens are geniuses by right of birth.—I wish you would not be so cruelly silent. I feel quite an interest in that young man. He was to have been so—"

"*So true*," replied Mrs. Reginald, turning upon him with a look that measured the whole man.

Oliver laughed, but his color deepened.

"I am so sorry I could not attend to that business for Mr. Dorrien," said Mr. Brown, raising his voice.

"Why so?" retorted Mrs. Reginald. "I think we get on very well without him," she added, glancing round the table in grim triumph; "and I dare say he does not miss us."

Mr. Dorrien, to say the truth, did not miss Mrs. Regi-

nald. He had been glad to escape from her presence and repair to the library, where John sat waiting for him.

"I am afraid you have hurried out to me, sir," said the young man, rising to address his cousin with the courtesy and respect habitual to him; "yet I said there was plenty of time."

"I was only too glad to get away," answered Mr. Dorrien, throwing himself down in an arm-chair with a look of disgust and weariness. "Mrs. Reginald has taken a dislike to Mr. Black, and quite forgets that she is a Dorrien by marriage, if not by birth; but we will not talk of all this. —What has happened?—What brings you back, John?—Did you miss the train?"

"Nothing has happened," answered John Dorrien, "and, to say the truth, I missed the train on purpose."

Mr. Dorrien rarely questioned. He knew that when people have something to say, they do say it without your taking that trouble; so he sat and waited.

"I thought," resumed John, "that it was not quite fair and honest in me not to tell you my real reason for taking this journey myself instead of asking Black, who has been so successful, to see to this business, in my stead."

"Well, I did wonder at it," replied Mr. Dorrien; "but this matter is so much more important than the other, that I did think you might not care to trust Mr. Black so far."

"Oliver Black may be trusted much farther," quickly answered John.

"We do not know much about him," retorted Mr. Dorrien. "Of course you think well of him—as to that, so do I; but a young man who was reared in wealth, and never tried, is always open to doubt."

"Yes, sir; but allow me to say that Oliver Black, apart from principle or honesty, has too much judgment to fall into the vulgar temptations which beset young men in positions of great trust. However, he has nothing to do with my coming back this evening."

A faint gleam of curiosity shone in Mr. Dorrien's blue eyes, but still he did not speak. He disliked the fatigue of it, for one thing; and then he read slight signs of embarrassment in John Dorrien's face, and it rather amused him. He liked his young cousin very well, but perhaps he

wanted him too sorely to like him much, and he was not sorry to find him at a disadvantage.

"You were speaking of marriage to me the other day," resumed John. "I have been thinking over what you said, and I agree with you, sir. I think it would be well if I were to marry; and if matters were brought to a final settlement between us."

"Of course it would," replied Mr. Dorrien, with sudden interest; "and let me tell you, John, that Mademoiselle Basnage is not merely rich, but pretty."

John raised his eyes to his cousin's in wonder and doubt.

"Then it was not Miss Dorrien that you alluded to the other evening when we spoke of this," said he.

"To my granddaughter?—oh! no," replied Mr. Dorrien, almost coldly.

There was a brief pause.

"I confess it was of her I thought," said John; "and my reason for taking this journey was that I wished to see her before matters went further. I have to go to Marseilles; thence I shall go on to Nice, and see Miss Dorrien. I have no intention of calling upon her. I only wish to see her."

"And could you really not go and look at a young lady without coming back to ask my leave, John?" remarked Mr. Dorrien, with his smooth irony.

"I did not come back to ask your leave," replied John, smiling, "but to tell you what I intended doing. It did not seem frank and honest in me to take this liberty with a young lady so nearly related to you without your knowledge."

"Very nice and honorable," murmured Mr. Dorrien, approvingly; "but that you always are, John. Well, seven years ago I did think that such an arrangement might be desirable, and I had the child here that she might be brought up with you; but it did not answer. And there are other objections. You see, John, we are getting on very well, I grant, but we are often hemmed in for want of capital; and I cannot help thinking that, as a man of business, you ought not to marry a poor girl. Miss Dorrien has nothing, and can have nothing, that does not come *from the business.* Mademoiselle Basnage would bring us

her father's help and forty thousand pounds—a million francs, John," added Mr. Dorrien, emphatically.

"We might have to pay dear for both," replied John, a little dryly.

"I grant that the father-in-law is objectionable, so was Madame Basnage, poor lady, but I have seen the daughter, and you may take my word for it, John, *she* is charming, pretty, modest, and accomplished. I wish you had seen her."

"I can take your word, sir," said John, quietly. "You are a good judge, and a critical one, but you must allow me to make two objections: Monsieur Basnage is a meddlesome, domineering man; is it desirable that he should know too much of our business, or have any right to interfere in it? Besides, I have not given up my old fancy. We must end by manufacturing our paper, and in that case Monsieur Basnage would be in the way. We are better without him and his forty thousand pounds, if they are bought at the price of liberty."

"Then you still think of that, John?" impatiently said Mr. Dorrien. "You are very willful."

"We are a willful race, I believe. And that papyrus, as the inventor calls it, would be the very thing for us, if we could secure the patent. I really think it a fine thing. But apart from all this, if our business be worth any thing—and I believe it to be in a fair way of becoming prosperous—why should your granddaughter, a Dorrien in blood and name, be excluded from its prosperity? Capital is too precious in our case to be withdrawn in her favor; but comfort, luxury, and ultimate wealth, may be hers if the arrangement you contemplated seven years ago be carried out now."

Mr. Dorrien stroked his chin, and looked half annoyed and half perplexed.

"All that is very specious, John," he said, rather dryly; "but suppose that, when matters come to a crisis, you do not care for Miss Dorrien, or that she does not care for you?"

"The risk must be run in any case," answered John, promptly. "The objection holds good with Mademoiselle Basnage, as well as with Miss Dorrien."

"But you would like to begin with Miss Dorrien," an-

swered Mr. Dorrien, smiling kindly. "Well, have your way, John; but remember that a woman is none the less charming for having money. I married an heiress; she was both lovely and amiable."

He sighed as he uttered the last words. His wife had been dear to him, and something of that old tenderness alighted, but very faintly, to say the truth, on her granddaughter. Mr. Dorrien was too proud a man to acknowledge to John that, if he had given up the arrangement he had first suggested seven years before this, it was because he had remembered how the young man had once shown a decided distaste for it. He did not ask John how or why his feelings had altered; he ignored the past, and confined his objections to the present time. He did not press them further upon his cousin now; he was inclined to treat this wish to see Miss Dorrien as a young man's fancy, which a nearer view of the young lady would dispel. Antoinette had not grown up handsome, he was sure, and Mademoiselle Basnage was really a very attractive girl, apart from her facinating million francs.

"Let it be so," he remarked aloud. "I mean, have your look at Miss Dorrien, though I thought you wiser than to go by that, John."

"What else can a man go by, when he does not happen to have known a woman for some years?" asked John; "but I am afraid, sir, that I am keeping you from your dinner. I dined at the station."

"Well, I had not finished," acknowledged Mr. Dorrien, "but, on seeing your note, I really thought some calamity had occurred. I was far from suspecting that such a trifle had brought you back."

"It is not a trifle to me," said John, coloring.

"Oh! of course not. Will you not join us?—your friend is there."

But John pleaded business, and thought he would attend to a few matters he had left by; besides, he confessed he did not care to have his presence known. He was going away again by the 11.15 train—it was not worth while seeing any one. Mr. Dorrien smiled languidly, but made no comment, and left him.

John did write a few letters, but he soon put his pen *down, and, leaning* back in his chair, he indulged in a fit

of reverie. He had told the truth to Mr. Dorrien, but not that whole truth which so seldom passes our lips; and John was reticent, perhaps because he was strong. He felt no need in times of trouble to talk of his annoyances; he wanted none to grieve, or to rejoice, or even to hope with him. He could bear his burden alone, whatever it might be, and just now he cared to share his thoughts with none. Practical as he had become, and hard even in some things —for a man of business must needs be hard if he would be successful in his dealings with other men—John Dorrien had the leaven of the old romance within him still. As a youth, he had indignantly protested against Mr. Dorrien's matrimonial schemes; but, when no attempt was made to force his inclinations, when circumstances removed Antoinette from the house, when her name was not even mentioned by her grandfather, his thoughts began unconsciously to turn to the childish bride who was growing into girlhood far away from him. With time he saw that Mr. Dorrien's plan was a very desirable one in many respects. If he could like Antoinette, and she could like him, it would be a good thing for both. And why should he not like her? Her faults seemed to fade away from his memory as the years sped on, and he remembered that she had a warm heart, and much sweetness of disposition. As to her being a rather plain child, it only proved that she would be a pretty girl. Besides, how could she be plain with such soft, dark eyes? And then she was his, or would be his—a something destined to himself exclusively, and which it seemed very sweet to possess. He allowed his thoughts to dwell upon her young image till it became very dear to him, and, before he knew how or why, John Dorrien found himself, if not in love, at least on the brink of that dangerous feeling. Then, indeed, he awoke; he roused and questioned himself, and almost angrily resolved to break with this fancy. But he found that it would not do. He had indulged it so long that it now wellnigh mastered him. Antoinette might have grown up to be antipathetic to him; she might be the last woman that he would care to spend his life with, but, unless he was sure of it, he could not give her up.

The moment Mr. Dorrien spoke of marriage to him, John Dorrien's mind was made up. He would see Antoinette,

and accept Mr. Dorrien's terms, or inform him that the partnership must have nothing to do with marriage and his granddaughter. He had not shown half the annoyance he had felt on hearing the name of Mademoiselle Basnage. He had never seen her, he detested her father, he longed to free La Maison Dorrien from his yoke, often a hard one; and, moreover, his youthful pride rose in arms on finding that a second time Mr. Dorrien had chosen a bride for him without first consulting his feelings on the subject. Antoinette Dorrien now acquired the one attraction she had failed in till then—opposition, open or covert, from the powers that were. What Mr. Dorrien, his mother, and Mrs. Reginald herself, felt on the matter, John knew without seeking the knowledge. That Mr. Brown would be all for Mammon was as sure as any rule in arithmetic can be. Antoinette had but one friend in her grandfather's house —the boy who had so vehemently declared that he would never marry her, and would never change his mind on that subject. If he had led another life—if he had not been so exclusively confined to the companionship of older people —John might never have cared for her; but, though unseen, she was the one youthful element, the one bright spot in the stern monotony of days devoted to toil, and often darkened by care. So, while Mr. Dorrien joined his guests, and John Dorrien sat alone looking at Polymnia, he let a young image, pleasing, though not that of a muse—the image of a dark-eyed girl—flit before him. Presently a scratching was heard at the door of the library, then a low whine.

"I tell you he is gone—look for yourself, if you don't believe me, foolish fellow!" So spoke Mrs. Reginald's deep voice, as she opened the door of the library to admit Carlo, who rushed in at his master, giving him through the open door a glimpse of his pale mother leaning wearedly on the banisters on her way up-stairs, and of Mrs. Reginald staring in at him in blank amazement. "I declare the dog was right," said she, "and there is John, actually your boy, come back!"

"But going again," said John; "that is why I did not join you, little mother. I hope you had a pleasant evening."

Mrs. Dorrien looked at Mrs. Reginald, who raised her *eyebrows.*

"I behaved abominably, John," she said. "I do not know how I could be so unladylike, so un-Irish, so inhospitable, to your friend. I fancy I frightened him away."

"What, poor Oliver again?"

"Yes—is it not shameful, John? And the worst of it is, that I don't know why I behave so badly."

"You will behave better next time," suggested Mrs. Dorrien, smiling faintly, but looking at John all the time.

"I!" cried Mrs. Reginald—"I should begin again to-morrow if I had the chance. I can't help it. When I see him I feel as Carlo feels when he sees a rat—I must worry him."

There was something so unreasonable in this frank confession of dislike that John could not help laughing, but he did not ask to know what had passed, as he might have asked at another moment, for it was now time for him to be gone. He gave Carlo a pat, Mrs. Reginald a hearty shake of the hand, and his mother a kiss.

"Wish me luck, little mother," he said.

"Wish you luck!" she replied—"why so, John? What is there new to wish you luck about?"

"Nothing new, little mother," he answered, smiling down in her face; "but will you not wish me luck all the same?"

She looked up fondly at him, as mothers look at their sons, taking pride in their manhood, and thinking them the kings of their sex. To Mrs. Dorrien the world held not another young man of twenty-five fit to compare with her John, and, if she had known the meaning of his request, she would have scorned the idea of any girl or woman being worthy of him. As it was, she answered, from the fullness of her heart:

"I wish you more than luck, John—I wish you happiness."

He laughed, but the words sounded as an omen, and as such he took them.

"Thank you, little mother," he said, gayly. "I hear my cab at the door, so good-by."

He left them so, with a bright face and a gay look.

"That boy has got something in his head," remarked Mrs. Reginald, looking after him.

"He never tells me any thing," sighed his mother.

"My dear, it is business," was Mrs. Reginald's soothing reply.

It was business, but it was also that John was not of a communicative nature. The honorable scrupulousness of his temper had brought him back to tell Mr. Dorrien of his intentions; but, if he could have helped it, John Dorrien would have trusted none with the bit of romance in which he was now indulging. He did not even care that any one should know in what direction lay the goal of his journey; and if the truth had been told, Oliver Black, who had never shared his thoughts even in his boyish days, was the last whom he would have liked to enlighten on that matter. But we live in glass houses at the best of times—walls which we think of stone are clear and transparent to our neighbor. There is a net in which we all move freely enough till its meshes inclose us; and so it now was in John Dorrien's case, though he never knew it.

Oliver Black had left early. He had left with Mr. Brown. Many men of business have a hobby—the one green spot in their barren lives. To collect old engravings was Mr. Brown's. In his dismay at the war between Mrs. Reginald and Mr. Dorrien's guest, he had, much against his wont, broached the theme of his collection. He had some fine, really very fine things—perhaps Mr. Black had a taste that way, and if so he would be most happy to show him the contents of his portfolios. They were more valuable than numerous—his Morghens he might venture to say were really fine. Indeed, it had often been a trouble to him to think what would become of them after his death. Mr. Dorrien did not happen to care for them, nor Mr. John either; and Mr. Brown did not wish to trouble them with a useless bequest.

"Of course not," said Mrs. Reginald, dryly; "who cares for things in portfolios?"

"Why not leave them to a museum?" asked Oliver Black.

Mr. Brown diffidently feared they might not be held worthy of that honor; but Oliver, who had to the highest degree the kind of good-nature that makes its owner wish to be pleasant to others, promptly suggested that provincial museums would be only too glad of such a legacy.

"We have had a museum lately founded at Saint-Ives,"

he said. "I know the director intimately. If you will kindly allow me to look at your engravings, I shall be most happy to suggest the matter to Monsieur de la Croix."

"I hate engravings," said Mrs. Reginald—"cold, hard things."

But Mr. Brown did not even hear this unkind speech. For once he was overpowered by his feelings—his color rose, his eyes sparkled, Mr. Black was too kind, but still he, Mr. Brown, would be most happy to submit his little collection to his approbation; and so when Mr. Black rose to go, Mr. Brown suggested that they should walk together as far as his rooms, if Mr. Black had the time, and there look at the Morghens. He scarcely hoped that Mr. Black would say yes to this proposal, but nothing could be more gracious, more good-humored than Mr. Black's assent He should be most happy to see the Morghens, he declared—indeed, to all seeming, Morghens were the delight of Oliver Black's heart.

And so these two went forth together in the clear starry night, and turned round the corner of the street to the dingy house where Mr. Brown lived, and stumbled up the ill-lit staircase that led to his two rooms. How cold, how dismal looked these rooms to the luxury-loving and luxuriously-reared Oliver! With a sort of shudder he asked himself if he should make himself such a sordid home as this for his old age, and with strong disgust he vowed that he would not. His only wonder was, that the old clerk could endure the daily contrast between Mr. Dorrien's stately old mansion and these penurious-looking rooms. But that contrast no longer existed for Mr. Brown, and these rooms, such as they were, called him master. Here he could spend his few leisure hours, here he could pore over the Morghens which he now displayed to Oliver. They were fine ones, as the young man, though no judge of such things, could see. He looked over them carefully, professed himself delighted with the treat Mr. Brown had given him, and promised to write to the director of the Saint-Ives *musée* the very next day.

Mr. Brown's dull eyes almost sparkled. It had been such a care to think how these Morghens were to be provided for after he was gone, and now here was a fair and honorable home all but open to them. In his gratitude he

wanted Oliver to go over them again, so that he might point out their special beauties; but Oliver, thinking that Mr. Brown was getting somewhat of a bore with his Morghens, excused himself, and, pleading letters to write, took his leave.

Oliver Black was fond of cigars. He liked good ones, or what he held to be such. A cigar-shop opposite Mr. Dorrien's house had just then a supply of what he considered first-rate Havanas. He turned back to it before walking home. Just as he entered the shop, John Dorrien was stepping into the cab at the door of the Hôtel Dorrien. The gas-light fell on his face, and Oliver knew him at once. He knew, too, the clear sounds of his voice—"Chemin-de-fer de Lyon."

Lyons—what could be taking him there? But that long line which crosses the heart of France had many stations short of Lyons, and also many beyond it. Swiftly and surely Oliver leaped to a conclusion, and laughed to himself as he went up to the counter and began selecting his favorite.

"John Dorrien is gone courting," he thought, much amused. "He was always a close fellow, but for all that I always knew what I wanted to know. He ought to remember about 'Miriam,' foolish fellow!"

CHAPTER XIX.

On a lovely afternoon, serene and fair, such an afternoon as belongs to southern climes, and is rarely seen unless beneath calm southern skies, John Dorrien, who had left Nice some hours, slowly drove up the steep road leading to the little southern village of La Ruya, which, for the last three years, had been Mrs. George Dorrien's residence. There was no token of it yet. Far below the road lay the Mediterranean Sea, blue, calm, and soft, and sleeping lazily in the sunshine. To the right rose rocks of gray granite, bristled with mighty aloes, whose huge leaves and bare roots hung above the path. Above these again, tall and

slender cypress-trees, of dark Oriental aspect, were seen on a background of blue sky; and here and there came a glimpse of green gardens, with the tender verdure of orange-trees. The first aspect of the south is full of enchantment. It looks like fairy tales and the Arabian Nights come true. The captive princess of the one, the favorite sultana of the other, might alike dwell here. The world looks like one where rain, or hail, or harsh tempests come not—a world where the days are all sun and the nights all stars; a world where there might be genii, or magicians, or fairies, but where it provokes you to find any thing commonplace, tame, or dull.

John Dorrien, who had never been in the south before this, also thought that he had never seen any thing so grand or so beautiful as that which he now gazed on, and he came to the conclusion that Mr. Dorrien's daughter-in-law had chosen a terrestrial paradise to live in, till he arrived at La Ruya itself; but here the world of fairies and lovely ladies suddenly vanished, and the beautiful decidedly gave way to the picturesque.

A few poor and mean dwellings, painted yellow, clustered together at the foot of a huge rock, on the very top of which rose one of those old ruined towers which are to be found along the Mediterranean; a token of the days gone by, when the Crescent ruled the southern sea, and the Frank could barely hold his own. The old keep still had a look of defiance, and stood out boldly on the clear sky, seeming to say, "See what I have been!" but the houses which had been reared in its shadow crumbled away in the sun without any such boast in their aspect. An aged woman, withered and brown, sat on the threshold of a shattered door, spinning with the old-fashioned distaff. A group of sunburnt children thrust their heads out of a paneless window above her, to stare at the stranger who came to La Ruya. The other houses remained blank and silent, as if they were tenantless. Only one dwelling, with a more decent look than the rest, had pretensions to size, and showed tokens of life; this was an inn. Hôtel du Chapeau Vert was inscribed in large characters on its sign-board; but John Dorrien looked in vain for some representation of the green hat; there was none.

"I shall stop here," he said to the driver, who raised his eyebrows.

"He hoped monsieur would get something to eat, that was all."

The question seemed an open one, yet two tables of deal wood, spread under a trellised vine in the open air in front of the inn, implied that Louis Brun, the innkeeper, did undertake to feed his guests—when he had any.

"I shall risk it," said John Dorrien, paying the man his fare and alighting. A woman in a white cap—a sure sign that she was not a southern by birth—came out to receive him. "I have come here to have a walk and see the country," said John Dorrien; "I suppose I can get some dinner."

"At what hour?" asked the landlady dubiously.

"Let us say five o'clock."

"If monsieur would not mind six—the *voiture* does not come in before five."

"And does the *voiture* bring in the dinner?"

"We have not many travelers, monsieur," said the woman, reddening a little.

"Very well, let it be six."

"Does monsieur sleep here?"

But John having ascertained that another *voiture* would take him on to Viragues, and that thence he could get back to Nice, thought he would depart with it—an answer that seemed to relieve Madame Brun greatly. Leaving her to her evident satisfaction, John Dorrien followed the high-road. It led him up a hill, with monotonous plantations of olive-trees on either side, and here and there a lonely farm, until it brought him at length to a church, standing alone on the brow of the mountain, and overlooking the deep valley beneath. A carved cross and three huge ilex-trees gave the little piazza in front of the portico a calm, monastic look. This was no village church, with peasant-dwellings clustering around it, as children gather round their mother's knee in love and reverence, but an austere and lonely teacher, raising her voice in the desert, as John the Baptist once raised his, calling on sinners to repent and mend their ways. John pushed the door open and entered. As he passed from the southern brightness of the day to the more than Gothic gloom within, he stood

irresolute, for at first he saw little or nothing; but gradually the darkness seemed to fade away, and he was aware of a brown old place, very quaint and very low, with heavy arches and stained-glass windows, and a few ancient pictures over its altars. The oaken benches were black with age, and here and there a gleam of tarnished gold shone through the perpetual twilight of the place, telling of the departed splendor and rich endowments of former ages. It was quite solitary, but a murmur of chanting came from behind the high altar. The singers were invisible. Not one token of common every-day life was to be found here. No little child was saying its prayers—one of the most beautiful sights in the Catholic churches of Catholic countries; no wearied woman knelt, resting herself in worship from the toil and cares of the day; no bareheaded man was humbly seeking strength wherewith to bear the burden of his life, and yet, even when the chanting ceased, as it did suddenly, the presence of God filled this silent, lonely church, and made it beautiful and holy, and John Dorrien felt that it was home, for it was the Father's house,

When the young man came out, he found a tall and pale Franciscan monk standing in the sunlit porch. He questioned him, and learned that this was a convent of monks, and also the parish church of La Ruya, and of many a similar hamlet; for the parish was large and scattered, said the monk, and the church had been built when the land was almost a desert, and not for its present uses, so unless on a Sunday it was not much frequented.

"Sunday!" thought John Dorrien, as he went down the hill—"this is Wednesday. Pity I cannot wait to see Mrs. George Dorrien and her daughter coming here." But as this was impossible, he settled on a most diplomatic method of ascertaining from Madame Brun, whom he did not wish to question too openly, where the two ladies were to be found, and his plans were laid by the time he reached the Chapeau Vert. This time he walked round the little inn, and entered it by a back-door, which he found ajar.

The Chapeau Vert was a straggling tenement, and it was not till he had crossed two rooms, strung with ropes of onions, that John Dorrien reached an apartment of higher pretensions. This was a low, dark room, of which

the gloom and freshness were grateful after the heat and sun of the day without. It was also evidently destined to the accommodation of select guests, when the "Green Hat" was honored with such, for it had a walnut-tree wood buffet, a straw-bottomed arm-chair, and a deal table, pleasantly placed near the open window. A screen of vine-leaves divided this from the garden, and the same vine hung in festoons round the adjacent kitchen-window. John Dorrien sat down in the arm-chair and waited till Madame Brun, whose white cap he saw flitting in the kitchen, should be disengaged, in order to address her.

"Well," suddenly said a young voice, of which he liked the pleasant ring, "have the hens made up their minds yet?"

A dubious, preparatory cough was Madame Brun's answer. It gave John time to look at the speaker. In the square, vine-hung frame of the kitchen-window, he saw the face of a young girl, who stood in the garden outside, leaning forward, with her arms carelessly folded on the window-sill. She was young, and she had all the charm of youth, its airy grace and happy brightness. She also had dark eyes, and the freshness of a rose.

"Silence means consent," she resumed, gayly. "How many eggs am I to take, Madame Brun?"

"Why, the fact is," replied Madame Brun, going to the window and lowering her voice mysteriously—"the fact is, I do not know if I can let you have any eggs, Mademoiselle Antoinette."

"No eggs!" exclaimed the young girl, in a tone of dismay. "O Madame Brun, *she* will be so cross!"

"Yes, and I am so sorry," resumed Madame Brun; "but, you see, we have got a traveler."

"A traveler! O Madame Brun, what is he like?"

This was spoken in a tone of breathless curiosity, which made John Dorrien lean back in his chair and keep out of sight.

"Quite a monsieur," promptly and decisively answered Madame Brun; "and if I cannot give him eggs, what am I to give him, Mademoiselle Antoinette?"

"Well, but what are *we* to eat?" retorted Mademoiselle Antoinette. "He cannot be so hungry as we are, I *am sure.*"

"Are you so hungry as all that, mademoiselle?"

Mademoiselle Antoinette declared she was starving, and Madame Brun asked the world what she was to do.

"How many eggs have you got?" resumed the young girl.

"Three."

"Then give him one, and I shall take the other two."

She was turning away, but Madame Brun arrested her.

"Mademoiselle, I can never offer him one egg," she declared, remonstratively.

"Then I shall take the three, and she can have the two; all the better, Madame Brun."

She waited for no further argument, but vanished, as John Dorrien guessed, from the sudden stream of sunshine that entered the kitchen when her figure left the window. One of the doors of the room where he sat opened on the garden. Through this door he at once walked out. A fig-tree and five or six orange-trees gave their shade to Madame Brun's garden. Heavy-leaved gourds were trailing everywhere, and tomatoes were ripening in the sun. The place had a thoroughly southern air of neglect, for, where Nature is prodigal of her gifts, man is niggardly of his labor; but southern, too, was the fragrance of the roses, which grew right and left in careless beauty. Through this little wilderness John Dorrien walked till, directed by a loud cackling of remonstrance, he came to the hen-coop. He there found Mademoiselle Antoinette, busy in rifling its contents. She was half kneeling on the gravel. The sun shone on her bare dark head, and John Dorrien saw her better than within. She was very unlike what he remembered her, wholly unlike what he had imagined her to be. Her dark eyes, which he recollected so languid and so sad, were full of fire and softness; the once sallow cheek was fair and blooming, the little wistful face was all merry dimples; there was nothing pensive about this Antoinette, though the clear, well-formed brow and expressive mouth told of intelligence and decision. He stood watching her with involuntary eagerness, and she, unconscious of his observation, was addressing a large white hen.

"I can only find two," she said; "Madame Brun says there are three. What have you done with the other one? Have you eaten it, *gourmande?*"

Before the white hen could answer this pertinent question, John Dorrien stirred slightly. Antoinette looked round, saw him, started up, and dropped the two eggs in her hand. They fell down on the ground, and were broken—not cracked, but really broken, with the yellow yelk and liquid white mixing up in the gravel at her feet. Nothing could exceed Antoinette's blank dismay at this mishap. Her color actually faded, and she seemed too much absorbed in the calamity to think of him who had caused it. John Dorrien bowed slightly, and walked away.

The garden was soon compassed. He turned back to the house, and found Madame Brun standing on the steps of her kitchen-door.

"I have been the cause of a misfortune," he said, smiling; "I have just made a young lady break two eggs."

"She has broken them!" cried Madame Brun, aghast.

"Let that be no trouble on my account," he quickly responded; "I do not care for dinner. But may I ask who that young lady is? I feel sure I have already seen her."

"Oh, that is Mademoiselle d'Armaillé," said Madame Brun. "But is monsieur sure that he does not care for dinner?" she dubiously added.

"Quite sure.—Are the D'Armaillés one of the families belonging to the neighborhood?"

Madame Brun shook her head in denial. The D'Armaillés came from ever so far away, she said—from some place beyond the sea; and, indeed, Mademoiselle Antoinette was not a real D'Armaillé, only people call her so, because her mother was the Countess d'Armaillé.

"And this young lady lives with her mother, I suppose?" said John.

Madame Brun stared. Why, did not monsieur know—but of course he did not, being a stranger—that Madame d'Armaillé had been dead more than a twelvemonth? that Mademoiselle Antoinette lived with her aunt, Mademoiselle Mélanie, who was as ill-tempered to her as she well could be? "How Mademoiselle Antoinette can bear it," continued Madame Brun, warming with her subject, "is more than I can imagine; but she has the sweetest temper in the world, I do believe. She is just like a bird; and, when her *aunt grum*bles, she just goes chirruping about, and does not

mind. She is very fond of birds," added Madame Brun, digressively, "and has a tame sparrow that goes about with her in the country. Sometimes he is perched on her finger, sometimes on her head. Indeed, she could tame any thing. The lizards in the garden come out to her when she sings to them. And there was a fine uproar once when her aunt caught her feeding the mice in the kitchen. I must say *that* was too much. But, you may believe me, sir, my bees, any bees, never sting Mademoiselle Antoinette—never. I do believe all these little creatures know that she would not hurt them."

John Dorrien was so much amazed to find that Antoinette's mother had been dead more than a year, and that Mr. Dorrien had remained ignorant of the fact, that he scarcely heeded any other portion of Madame Brun's discourse; but when he recovered from that surprise he could not help wondering that the landlady of the Chapeau Vert should know so much of the domestic concerns of the late Madame d'Armaillé and her daughter, and also be on such familiar terms with the latter.

Madame Brun herself explained the fact. She had been Madame d'Armaillé's servant till that lady's death, when she married Brun. She was not going to stay with Mademoiselle Mélanie—not she.

"And so Madame d'Armaillé has been dead a year?" said John, scarcely able to believe it.

"Oh, yes, a year last Saturday week; they had her *bout de l'an* in the parish church. Mademoiselle Mélanie, who is no better than a heathen, never went; but Mademoiselle Antoinette was there, of course, and nearly cried her eyes out. Poor little thing! I always say it is no fault of hers if she has not a bit of religion."

"Not a bit of religion!" repeated John Dorrien, slowly.

"Well, no; they none of them had any, you see, and the child has grown up a little heathen. I taught her a prayer or two," added Madame Brun, shaking her head, "but that Mélanie found it out, and laughed at her—and young people cannot bear being laughed at."

"True," said John Dorrien, gazing abstractedly before him and knitting his brows, "young people, as you say, cannot bear it."

He looked dull and wearied, thought Madame Brun.

Was he—spite his professions of not caring for dinner—was he hungry? She thought of the broken eggs with much vexation, for suppose the *voiture* did not bring her in those stores on which she reckoned for his meal, and suppose it went forth, to the shame of the Chapeau Vert, that a guest had not even one egg wherewith to break his fast while abiding beneath its roof? Bread she had, and sour wine, and stale cheese, but Madame Brun could not offer such unpalatable viands as those to such a monsieur as the one who stood in her presence. Any one could see he was used to the best of every thing! If she could only dish him up a chicken *en blanquet* it would be quite a pleasure. Perhaps Baptistina would let her have a chicken. But, no; ever since she had threatened Baptistina's Andrea off her premises, there had been war between them. It was not to be thought of. There was nothing for it but to trust to the *voiture;* and, failing this, to utter an honest and heroic "Je n'ai rien."

"I think I shall go out again," said John Dorrien, suddenly rousing himself from the fit of abstraction which had led to Madame Brun's uneasy soliloquy. "I have seen the parish church. What other object of interest is there about here?"

"There is the dark valley," replied Madame Brun, brightening at the thought of getting him out of the way for a decent space of time, for he could not go to the dark valley without being some hours absent, at least.

John Dorrien said he would go to the dark valley; and having inquired the way to it, which apparently offered no complications, he again went forth. Madame Brun watched him as he walked away, with downcast eyes and gloomy brow, and thought:

"That's the way with monsieurs. They get dispirited when any thing interferes with their meals. How soon he would brighten if I could set a nice hot fowl before him! And see how downhearted he is because he thinks he will get nothing to eat!"

CHAPTER XX.

JOHN DORRIEN was young, and he had the hearty appetite of a young man who enjoys unbroken health. Though he could bear the loss of a meal, the meal itself could not be a matter of indifference to him. Yet his dinner had nothing to do with the gloomy looks which Madame Brun had noted, and interpreted according to her fears. He had had anxieties and cares before this day, but they had been wholly unlike the perplexity which now troubled him. Madame Brun had uttered words, and implied facts, which startled and grieved him. Was this young girl, so pleasant to look at, but so badly reared, was she the girl around whose image his young fancy had lingered for years, and of whom he had thought, in the old church on the hill, as kneeling down in one of those dark benches by her mother's side, or tripping down the sunlit steps of the portico, in all the charm and grace which innocent piety can bestow on maidenhood? With abhorrence he thought of receiving a wife from Mademoiselle Mélanie's hand, and fresh from her teaching; but with infinite pity he thought, too, of the sad-eyed little mistress of Carlo, reared by that sinister woman, and with involuntary tenderness of the bright girl whose lot it was to live with that unkind companion. But we are complex creatures at the best, and with these feelings others were inextricably mingled. It is sweet to snatch a brand from the burning, and so, notwithstanding his bitter disappointment, John Dorrien could not help feeling a sort of pleasure in not finding his ideal woman ready made at his hand: she was all wrong, and that was very sad, but he could make her all right, and that would be very delightful. Why should not this Antoinette be his Eve, in the dearer sense of the word? Adam gave his flesh and blood only, but John would give his spiritual being, his inner and better self, to be hers for evermore. That she would accept his teaching, and bow to it with a woman's graceful submission, he did not doubt; for, alas! this good John Dorrien had the weakness of his sex, and what could woman be made for but to tread in the path marked out by her master, man, and reverently follow his footsteps? That Antoinette Dorrien should think for her-

self in those awful and momentous matters of faith, John would not admit. She was a girl, and of course she would do as she was bid, and believe as she was told.

Absorbed in these thoughts he walked on, mechanically following the winding path pointed out by Madame Brun, till it brought him to the foot of the mountain. The way had not seemed long, and he had not raised his eyes from the ground, when he suddenly stood in a gap of the cliff, and, looking up, found himself at the entrance of a gloomy little gorge. The character of the spot was so impressive that for a moment John forgot all else. How silent, how austere was this narrow solitude! How steep and dark rose those rocks against the blueness of the sky, save where here and there they flushed red in the sunlight! And what a low murmur, as of remonstrance or discontent, came from the mountain-torrent, which, after leaping down among the rocks like living silver, made its way into a little gully, and vanished there!

He threw himself down on the grassy earth, and for a while he forgot the sudden trouble which had risen in his life. With the eager and passionate fondness of a man reared in cities, he gazed on all those tokens of her lovely life which Nature had scattered around him in the princely profusion of one who fears no stint. Tufts of beautiful maiden-hair fern grew in every cranny where the spray and freshness of the water-fall could reach. Graceful plants hung down in banners from the rocks, or trailed along the earth in the richest luxuriance. Wherever the young man looked he saw beauty and grace mingling fearlessly with savage sternness, and whatever he saw filled him with delight. Oh, for the days when he loved "Miriam the Jewess," and when, free from toil and care, he wandered with her in spots like this!

That buried dream, so long put by, recalled that other dream, resting at least on some foundation of reality, but which a few words from Madame Brun had so recently broken, and with it came back the most cruel perplexity. Should he give up this young girl, and let her drift down the tide of life her own way, while he took his? He owed her nothing, he was in no manner pledged to her, and should be doing her no wrong. Her own grandfather had *ceased* to wish for the fulfillment of his original plan, and

preferred the possession and enjoyment of large capital to the empty boast of leaving the business to unborn sons of his own blood. He urged Mademoiselle Basnage upon John Dorrien, and Mademoiselle Basnage, John knew, had been reared in a convent, and had therefore been accustomed to say her prayers without being laughed out of it. And then Antoinette Dorrien, though declined by him, would never know it. She would not undergo the humiliation and pain of a woman whom a man has seen, looked at, and rejected. She could live on in this southern hamlet on her grandfather's allowance, she could spend her days and years beneath these blue skies, and lead the quietly sensuous southern life—that life which, so far as it goes, is complete and fair. Was it so hard a lot, to one who had known none other, to see the sun shine day after day, and watch the lovely change of summer to autumn, of autumn to winter, of winter back again to spring? Was not all this beauty a sort of Eden?

Happy Antoinette to live among such scenes!—happy if she only knew it; for alas! happiness is nothing without the consciousness of its existence; and Adam's fatal disobedience has not necessarily acquired for himself or his posterity the knowledge of such blessings as are still left after the fall. Sometimes men and women have glimpses of their own bliss; sometimes, like travelers in the desert, they see the Gardens of Irem, and tremble because they are but a vision, soon to vanish, leaving only arid waste behind; sometimes it is so, but, as a rule, what heart is blessed so far as to be aware of its own good?

"Yes," thought John Dorrien, with a sigh of pity and regret, "that must be her lot, after all—to stay here. Well, it is not so hard a fate; she will get married, and—"

He paused at this prospect. His heart beat with a jealous throb, his brow flushed with a sudden pain. His fancy had made this girl his so long that he could not give her up now without a pang. It was one thing to marry Mademoiselle Basnage, pretty, accomplished, amiable, and pious; and it was another thing to contemplate that this perverted Antoinette, so long dreamed of as his own, should become the Antoinette of another man.

John Dorrien rose. He kicked a stone out of his path; he was troubled, irritated, and perplexed. He wanted this

girl; he could not give her up, and yet his reason told him that, in taking her, he was steering headlong toward that matrimonial wreck which it is so fearful a thing to contemplate from the shore.

Take away the fact that he, the disciple of the Abbé Véran, the rigid, uncompromising Christian, ought to have nothing in common with this poor young pervert, was it not the merest folly, even in a common-sense point of view, to seek life-long union with a girl whose every feeling must be at variance with his own? Was not community of belief one of the essentials in so close a bond as that of marriage? How could he, the Christian man, who prided himself on the grand privilege of his faith, choose this misguided girl to be the future mother of his children? Was it not merely wrong, but also dangerous? So spoke Reason; but that Charity, which the Apostle placed beyond all else—that pure flame, which, though it may burn for man or woman, is ever caught from the fire of Divine love, is above all things generous, and every generous impulse of his nature now pleaded for Antoinette in the heart of John Dorrien. He already loved her a little, and he pitied her very much. He longed to bring back this lamb, straying in the dreariness of unbelief, to the pleasant pastures and sweet waters of his own faith. Oh, if he could but teach her a twofold love, how sweet, how pure a reward this would be! His heart beat at the thought; then, after a pause of doubt, he said to himself, with all the recklessness of a strong desire, "Why not venture?"

He walked back to the inn in a calmer mood. As he approached the hamlet, he looked curiously around him, wondering where the dwelling of Antoinette Dorrien could be. He paused as he passed by the open gates of a stately but deserted villa, which his abstraction had prevented him from noticing before. White bills, defaced with "Propriété á vendre" upon them, were stuck on the two pillars which guarded the entrance. The vases that had adorned them once were broken, and the aloes in them burned up with the sun. Red geraniums and tall rose-trees still bloomed above the high walls, but their very luxuriance had a desolate meaning. The villa stood alone, and far away in the green grounds, with a long avenue of cypress-trees leading to its closed doors. A grand vista of glassy

sea, mountain, and sky, rose above the low-terraced roof of the house. It all seemed like a dream of beauty to John Dorrien, but beauty here wore a lonely and forsaken aspect, which, spite the smiling southern sky, was not without pathos. He pushed the gate open, and entered. As he crossed the grass-grown threshold, a bird flew away with a startled rush of wing, but no token of life met his view. He went on between those dark and solemn cypress-trees, on which the setting sun cast a golden light, and the very loveliness of all things seemed strange and unreal.

He reached at length the shut-up house, and walked round. Every door and casement was closed. Long-imprisoned festoons of vine veiled the lower windows. Mesembryanthemum hung from the balconies, and swayed in a little breeze which came from the sea. The air was pure and balmy, and the sweetness of the south stole through the young man's senses, bringing back, like the echo of distant music, every classic and romantic vision of his youth. That deserted garden seemed meant for lovely ladies and gallant cavaliers to disport in. Here they might sit in the shade, and tell love-tales all the day long. Here, too, as he wandered on, and the garden became a wilderness, John felt that in this Nature, so gracious and so fair, the Galatea of an older world might have hidden in the shade, or that Corydon might have piped on his wonderful reed, and Damœtus might have striven for the carved cup which was to reward the skill of the victor.

He reached at length the boundary of this fair domain —a low sunlit bank, which divided the garden from a plantation of olive-trees rising above it in terraces, Italian-fashion. In some places the bank merged into a wall of loose stones, covered with golden mosses and dainty ferns and rich sedums, and weeds unknown to the north; a low boundary-wall, crumbling away in the sunshine, which had been baking it into yellow and red for many a summer—a wall which would have been the delight of a painter's eye, and in which he would have reveled as a miser may revel in a golden treasure; and, sitting on this wall, John Dorrien now saw Antoinette reading. He stood still—he did not want her to see him, nor did she. She sat very quietly, regardless of the sun, intent and happy; and suddenly, though alone, she burst into a loud peal of girlish laughter,

sweet and clear as a bell. Much would John have liked to know what it was in the little yellow Tauchnitz volume in her hand that moved her to this lonely mirth; but, unwilling that she should see and recognize him, he turned away unperceived, walked back through the lonely cypress avenue, and thence made his way to the Chapeau Vert.

He found Madame Brun proud, beaming, and hospitable. Would monsieur like to break his fast at once? She had just received a large slice of ham. Mademoiselle Antoinette had brought it.

"She is so good!" gushingly added Madame Brun. "Her conscience pricked her for the eggs, and, Madame Clarke having sent her the ham, she had brought it to make amends to my traveler."

"Mademoiselle Antoinette is very kind," said John Dorrien, smiling; "but if food is so scarce in this locality, I think she ought to keep that ham; for, after all, I can go away and eat elsewhere."

"Well, so I said," naïvely replied Madame Brun; "but Madame Clarke sent other things besides the ham; and Mademoiselle Mélanie was out when the hamper came, and never knew any thing about the ham which Mademoiselle Antoinette brought at once to me. She cannot take it back now; and monsieur may as well have it, for it would only be wasted."

John Dorrien could not gainsay this argument, and, as dinner was utterly out of the question in this earthly paradise, in which, moreover, he did not intend prolonging his stay, he accepted Madame Brun's offer, and made what that lady called a *goûter* on bread, ham, and sour wine. Madame Brun herself waited upon him, and he took the opportunity of questioning her concerning the deserted villa.

"Oh! that was Madame Clarke's house," promptly replied Madame Brun. "They were such good people, and so fond of Mademoiselle Antoinette. It was a sad day for her when they went away to Nice."

"And will they not come back?" asked John Dorrien.

"Oh! no, never," mysteriously replied Madame Brun.

John could not but ask, as it was evidently intended that he should, why the Clarkes were not to come back to their own house. The reply was promptly and freely given. The Clarkes could not come back because they had been found

out. Would monsieur believe it? It turned out that these Clarkes were nobody! They were very rich, but had been next to nothing in their own country—peasants, masons—Heaven knew what! They had come to this simple, unsuspecting La Ruya, and, taking advantage of its innocence, had passed themselves off for people of consequence, and been received and visited as such by the seven great families who had villas here. But they had been found out—by the merest accident; and, being much mortified at the sorry figure they cut after the discovery of their mean origin, they had left La Ruya in disgust, put up their villa, on which they had spent so much money, for sale, and gone to Nice, whence they would never return.

"It is a pity though for La Ruya," added Madame Brun, "for they were rich, and spent plenty of money; and Mademoiselle Mélanie might have held her tongue, but they did not like her much, and she would have her revenge. An English gentleman, who came here to paint the dark valley, first let it out, but no one liked to take it up; however, Mademoiselle Mélanie, who is as spiteful as a cat, said to them one day, when the villa wanted repairs, what a comfort it must be that they understood all about building, for they could not be taken in. Madame Clarke tried to make it out that her husband had been an architect, but he shook his fist and swore, and said in his bad French that he had been a mason, and was not ashamed of it, and that those who did not like it might leave it. He was a good sort of man was Monsieur Clarke, but madame was so vexed and affronted that she would not have staid an hour longer if she could have helped it, and that was how they went away. It was a great pity for Mademoiselle Antoinette, who was always with their children, and very nice young ladies they were—quite pretty and well-behaved, and all so fond of Mademoiselle Antoinette. For, you see, she was a countess's daughter, and it was a fine thing for them to speak of their friend Madame la Comtesse d'Armaillé," added Madame Brun, with that shrewd insight into the weaknesses of their betters which the so-called lower classes are apt to display. "Well, Mademoiselle Antoinette liked them, too, poor young lady, and used to study with the Demoiselles Clarke, and run about the garden and the grounds; and, even now that they are gone, she climbs over the wall and

jumps and wanders about there, and she is always reading those books which the Clarkes left behind them."

John Dorrien, who had been careful not to check Madame Brun's loquacity, now supposed that Mademoiselle Antoinette's abode was not far from the villa of the Clarkes.

"Oh! very near it," said Madame Brun; "a little low house, painted yellow. Monsieur would see it when he left by the *voiture*. There was a garden with roses in front."

John had no more to learn. He would leave La Ruya, and the Chapeau Vert, and Madame Brun. The rickety car that was to take him on soon appeared. He climbed up on the roof, and the slow vehicle stole up the hill, and ere long passed by the dilapidated dwelling where Antoinette grew nigh Mademoiselle Mélanie, as a fresh wild-flower may grow in the shelter of a prickly thorn. John Dorrien could not help looking for her, and he saw her again. She had come out to look at the car going by, and she stood on the threshold of the low door, with the gloom of a dark room behind, and the warm sunlight from the west pouring on her bare head and fresh young face. She looked at the car with the grave curiosity of a child, and this time her tame bird was perched on her finger, and pecked it. There was no desire and no regret in the dark eyes of Antoinette. She knew, she guessed nothing. No presentiment told her that the traveler who gazed down at her so steadily, and whose look she returned with calm unconsciousness, was the arbiter of her fate, and had mentally decided on what her destiny should be. Perhaps, though he knew it not himself, the clear, silvery laugh of the lonely girl had won the day, and fixed the fate of John Dorrien, as well as that of Antoinette, for evermore.

The car went up the hill, then rattled down on the other side, and vanished; and Antoinette, turning away, and entering the house, said, to the sallow woman sitting there:

"The diligence has just gone by, and, aunt, it is as stupid as ever."

For, alas! so it is with the wisest of us. Our destiny goes by, and we do not recognize it. We see an old red-and-yellow car going up-hill, and we do not know till all is over, sometimes till years have passed, and turned the dark locks gray, and made the bright eyes dim, that it was a wonderful chariot, coming straight from Fairy-land.

John Dorrien knew better than Antoinette how full of meaning that day in La Ruya had been for him; but what he knew he kept to himself, and, when he met Mr. Dorrien again, there was nothing in his aspect that told the quietly-observant blue eyes of that languid gentleman of the sharp struggle which had gone on within. To all seeming, the only important item in his information was the death of Mrs. George Dorrien, and the long concealment of it by her sister-in-law. Mr. Dorrien's pale cheek took a faint tinge of red as he learned how he had been deceived.

"I must see to this," he said, a little sharply, "and I must take Miss Dorrien out of Mademoiselle Mélanie's hands, place her in some house—in some convent—"

"Why not bring her here, sir, under your own care?" interrupted John Dorrien.

This was the only intimation he gave that he still clung to the wish of making Antoinette his wife; but Mr. Dorrien understood his meaning, and replied, slowly:

"Well, yes, as you say, John, why not bring her here?"

He said no more, nor did John Dorrien, but this much sufficed, and it was all that passed on the subject between these two. Neither Mrs. Reginald nor John's mother knew where he had been, nor what was in part his errand. That business journey was held of no more account than any other. Oliver Black himself, however shrewd his surmises may have been, had no opportunity of testing their correctness by questioning his friend. The day before that on which John Dorrien arrived, he was sent to the west of France by Mr. Dorrien. He remained two months away, and when he came back Antoinette had been some time in her grandfather's house.

CHAPTER XXI.

No one, not even John, ever knew what correspondence passed between Mr. Dorrien, Mademoiselle Mélanie, and Antoinette Dorrien, before it was finally settled that her grandfather's house was henceforth to be the young girl's

home. Mr. Dorrien's confidence in John, so far as business went, was unlimited; but every thing of a private nature he jealously kept to himself, and this thing proved no exception. The only information Mr. Dorrien gave to John was conveyed indirectly one evening at dinner.

"Mrs. Reginald," he remarked, "will you kindly have a room prepared for my granddaughter, Miss Dorrien? She will be coming here in a few days."

Mrs. Reginald's spoon remained uplifted on its way to her mouth.

"Is Miss Dorrien alone?" she asked, in her deepest bass.

"Quite alone. Her mother has been dead more than a year; and that strange person—Mademoiselle Mélanie—though she has chosen to say that she will travel with Miss Dorrien, is no more to be admitted to this house than she was formerly—not even as a visitor."

"I am delighted to hear it," emphatically answered Mrs. Reginald.

"Perhaps," continued Mr. Dorrien, "you will also be so kind as to go and meet Miss Dorrien in my stead. I should find it awkward and unpleasant to tell any lady—even Mademoiselle Mélanie—that she must not enter my house. Miss Dorrien will arrive next Friday by the afternoon train. I hope you are disengaged?"

"Oh! quite," answered Mrs. Reginald, trying not to look like a warrior ready for battle; but the spark in her brown eye showed that Mademoiselle Mélanie, no less than Oliver Black, had the power of raising her ire.

No more was said on the subject. Mrs. John Dorrien, who was present, looked uneasily at her son on hearing the name of Antoinette. He answered the look with a kind smile that said, "Do not be afraid."

But afraid Mrs. John Dorrien was, after a fashion; for when she left the room, and John came out with her, she laid her hand upon his arm, and, looking wistfully up in his face, she said in a low, entreating tone:

"You will not be hasty, John?"

"No, little mother," he quietly answered—"I shall not."

"She is your cousin, you know, and Mr. Dorrien's *granddaughter*; and I dare say she is much improved."

"Little mother," said John, laughing, "I shall be very kind to her."

But no more then, than when he came back from La Ruya, did he tell his mother that he had seen Antoinette, and heard her laugh as she sat on the wall, and fallen in love with her.

When Mrs. Dorrien colored photographs, and earned her bread and Johnny's, and did not know how to make both ends meet, she rarely troubled herself with cares of which she did not feel the pressure. But, now that these troubles were over, she vexed her spirit with many useless speculations. Would John and Antoinette take to each other? How would John behave? And how would all this affect the important matter of the partnership, which, after being mentioned once, had been dropped as entirely as if the question had never been raised? So thought Mrs. Dorrien as she sat alone in her room that evening; and, when Mrs. Reginald came in and looked at her, the thoughts at once expressed themselves in speech.

"O Mrs. Reginald," she exclaimed despondingly, "how will it all end?—I mean between John and Antoinette?"

"My dear, I can tell you to a T," airily replied the lady, taking a chair, and sitting down opposite her friend, with her hands upon her knees. "They will love, or they will hate, each other, of course; and, whichever they do, they will be sure to fight."

"Fight! Mrs. Reginald!" exclaimed Mrs. Dorrien, with a little start—for she was fastidious about speech, and had never got fairly accustomed to her friend's nervous English.

"Call it quarreling, if you like, my dear," answered Mrs. Reginald, with much equanimity; "whatever name you give it, it's human nature. Children do nothing else, and young people are only older children; as to that, so are we all children—all of us, my dear."

"Boys are quarrelsome," said Mrs. Dorrien, with a little sigh, "but dear John never was; and girls—"

"Girls," interrupted Mrs. Reginald, "are their papas' daughters, and inherit the paternal propensities. They do not do it after the paternal fashion, but 'tis all one. Human nature, dear—human nature. Don't *I* feel that I shall like to go and fetch that girl, and take her out of that

Mademoiselle Mélanie's claws! I wonder why I do like it, but I do—on the same principle, I suppose, that men and nations like war. There's excitement in it, to begin with; and then there's strategy—which is as good as chess, any day; and then—"

"Pray don't!" entreated Mrs. John Dorrien, piteously. "I cannot bear to think that John and Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter should disagree!"

"Oh! they may not disagree," composedly retorted Mrs. Reginald, "but fight they will. I tell you that we shall see them, this little Antoinette, who was a vixen, and John, who, though good, is not an angel—I tell you we shall see them at it. Let us hope that John will come out of the contest with flying colors; but I don't know—I don't know—women are apt to have the best of it."

John's mother looked injured.

"I cannot believe that my dear boy will allow himself to be brought into any quarrel with Miss Dorrien," said she.

"Now that's just like a mother," retorted Mrs. Reginald, laying her hand on Mrs. Dorrien's arm, "so like a mother! Why, your dear boy, who is the best boy in the world, is a most provoking boy, with his cool ways. And he thinks a good deal of himself, for all he is so modest; and he will argue on a pin's-head, if you give him the chance; and he's almost always right, which is more than a woman can bear," candidly added Mrs. Reginald.

"O Mrs. Reginald, I thought you liked John!" remonstrated John's mother.

"Of course I do like him, the dear boy!"

"And if he and Miss Dorrien fall out, what is to become of the partnership?"

"Well, dear, let us hope they will not fall out, and let us do our best to keep them friends.

"But it is so unjust that John should depend for his position upon a girl's fancy or caprice, Mrs. Reginald."

Mrs. Reginald rubbed her nose with her forefinger.

"Not John's fault," she suggested.

"John's fault!" John's mother was all amazement.

"Not too sure of himself and his value!" continued Mrs. Reginald, shrewdly.

Mrs. Dorrien looked affronted.

"Not too fond of his own way and his own opinions," persisted Mrs. Reginald.

"I am afraid he is," reluctantly confessed Mrs. Dorrien.

"And I am sure of it," honestly said Mrs. Reginald, "and for all that he is the best and dearest boy in the world; and it will all end well, my dear."

And what with the praise, and what with the prediction, John's mother felt somewhat comforted.

That strategy which Mrs. Reginald justly considered one of the charms and attractions of war, proved at fault in her case, in the matter of Antoinette Dorrien's arrival. Mademoiselle Mélanie left La Ruya a day earlier than that which had been agreed upon between her and Mr. Dorrien; and thus, instead of being met at the station, she had the satisfaction of driving up to the door of her enemy, and sending him in word that mademoiselle had arrived.

"Monsieur is out," replied the portress. "Every one is out," she added, "but I think Madame Reginald is at home."

"Then tell her," angrily retorted Mademoiselle Mélanie.

The portress sent a message through a servant, who, after a brief interval, during which Antoinette and her aunt sat perfectly still in the cab, came back with the intimation that Madame Reginald was at home, and was waiting for Mademoiselle Dorrien in her sitting-room.

The man standing at the door of the cab had delivered his message with the impassiveness of Fate, but Antoinette colored on hearing him, and darted a quick, uneasy look at Mademoiselle Mélanie, who only smiled disdainfully, and sharply said: "Well, why don't you get out? Don't forget your bird," she sarcastically added, as Antoinette carefully lifted up a little cage, out of which a tiny brown thing was vainly attempting to peep. "I know," angrily continued Mademoiselle Mélanie, "you think more of that bird than you do of me."

"I am very fond of Joli," said Antoinette, "and you know, aunt, how fond of me he is; how he never flies away, nor—"

"Rubbish!" interrupted Mademoiselle Mélanie. "Get down, do."

She gave her cold cheek to the young girl to kiss, scolded the cabman because he attempted to move her

trunk instead of that of her niece, and sullenly returned the young girl's wistful look as she alighted, and stood hesitatingly on the threshold of her new home, with the little cage in her hand.

"I shall come soon and see you, aunt," she said, softly.

This promise Mademoiselle Mélanie ignored, but, casting an ireful look toward the windows which she supposed to belong to Mrs. Reginald's apartment, she muttered, angrily:

"Her sitting-room! as if I would condescend to enter it! My brother was Count d'Armaillé," added Mademoiselle Mélanie, leaning back in the cab, and looking dignified; "you may tell her so if you like.—Drive on!"

The cabman drove off as he was bid, and Antoinette stood alone under the archway, with her trunk by her side, and the impassive servant waiting her pleasure.

"Shall I show mademoiselle up-stairs?" he at length suggested.

Antoinette did not answer at once. She felt rather chilled at her reception, and stood listening to the cab, as it drove away, and looking at the silent, flagged court before her. The servant, thinking she had not understood his offer, repeated it, and attempted to take the cage from her.

"Thank you; I remember the way," she gravely answered, "and I always carry my bird myself."

She crossed the court, and went up the steps with her long traveling-cloak hanging on her arm. As she passed by the library, she remembered that her mother and she had lived there, and with a sudden impulse she opened the door and went in. The room was not much altered. The windows still let in a green glimpse of the garden, the faded gilding of the books still shone from the walls, the leather chairs, dark and massive, did not look much the worse for the wear of all these years. The only difference between the past and present aspect of the room was in an open bureau, in which were scattered papers, and on these lay a little round ball of white wool.

"Carlo!" cried Antoinette, darting forward with a sudden and joyous impulse—"I am sure you are Carlo."

Carlo's only reply to this greeting was a low growl, and a display of still shining white teeth. Antoinette drew back in sudden alarm.

"Do not be afraid, he will not hurt you," said John Dorrien, who had that moment entered the room through the window opening on the garden.

It was thus they met.

"I am your cousin, John Dorrien," he said, smiling, and holding out his hand.

"Are you!" answered Antoinette, in seeming doubt, "I should not have known you again—Carlo has forgotten me," she quickly added.

"You have left us so long," apologetically replied John; "but have you long been come?—we did not expect you till to-morrow."

"Yes, she is so tiresome," pettishly said Antoinette; "she did it on purpose, you know. I have only just come, and I am to go up to Mrs. Reginald's sitting-room. This is the way, is it not?"

"Yes, this is the way," he replied, following her to the door, and opening it for her; "but why will you not shake hands with me, Cousin Antoinette?"

"I beg your pardon," she said, with a start and a deep blush. She bent her abashed face as she held out her hand to him; but that hand remained inert in his, and made no effort to return his cordial pressure. With the same passiveness she met Mrs. Reginald up-stairs. That lady welcomed her kindly, slightly commented on her having taken the wrong train as "a pity," and finally asked if she did not feel tired, and would not be glad to go to her own room. This remark only did Antoinette answer.

"I am not very tired," she replied, "but I fancy my little bird is. I shall be glad to take him to my room; but must I not see Mr. Dorrien first? Perhaps he is in now," she suggested.

"My dear child, Mr. Dorrien is out, Mrs. John is out, and I have not long been in," answered Mrs. Reginald, with a touch of asperity. "We expected neither you nor your bird until to-morrow, you know."

Antoinette looked at her in some wonder, but said, quietly:

"Then I must wait till Mr. Dorrien comes in."

There was something so very tranquil in her tone that Mrs. Reginald set her head on one side to give her one of her looks; then she looked at the sparrow, still vainly at-

tempting to peep out of his cage; then, drawing a deep breath, she walked to the door. Antoinette followed her, still carrying her cage, and her long cloak still trailing on the floor; but she did not look round at John Dorrien. The young man, though he had much to do just then, remained standing by Mrs. Reginald's fireplace, with his elbow resting on the marble slab of the chimney, and his eyes fastened on the door which had closed upon Antoinette. Thus did Mrs. Reginald find him when she returned at the end of a few minutes. She went straight up to him.

"John, my dear boy!" she kindly said, "what are you thinking of?"

He looked at her and smiled slowly, but did not answer the question. Mrs. Reginald nodded sagely.

"A nice little thing," she said, "but—"

"But what?" asked John.

"Not easily dealt with, I fancy."

"What makes you think so, Mrs. Reginald?"

"Nothing and every thing," was the sententious and mysterious reply.

"Say one thing, Mrs. Reginald."

"Well, then, she is cool, for one thing. She gave me quite a calm, surprised look when I said she had taken the wrong train."

"Did she?" laughed John, looking amused; "but she reddened too, Mrs. Reginald."

"Very slightly," was Mrs. Reginald's dry answer. "You will have to mind your P's and Q's, John, or you will not be on a bed of roses if you have many dealings with *that* young lady."

The words were scarcely uttered when Mrs. Reginald regretted them; but they seemed to produce no effect on John Dorrien, who merely said:

"I wonder when I have been on a bed of roses, Mrs. Reginald?" and, looking at his watch, he left her without waiting for an answer.

He had not long been gone when Mrs. Reginald, who was standing at her window, watching for the return of Mrs. John Dorrien, saw that lady crossing the court-yard. She tapped the window-panes energetically; John's mother looked up, saw her, and nodded and smiled. Presently she entered the room, a little flushed and out of breath, as she

was often now. Mrs. Reginald greeted her with a breathless "She's come, dear!"

"Come!"

"Yes, dear; took the wrong train on purpose. Mademoiselle Mélanie brought her to the door—did it on purpose—reckoned on taking her in to Mr. Dorrien and defying him—but she was disappointed of that, at least," added Mrs. Reginald, a little grimly, "for I was the only one within. John met her on the stairs, I suppose, for they came in together."

Mrs. Dorrien looked anxious at once. She sat down on a chair, she untied her bonnet-strings, she tied them again nervously, and at length she said:

"How is she?—how do you like her?"

"Oh, she is like most girls," carelessly replied Mrs. Reginald; "a little red and white thing, with black eyes and ever so much hair. And she travels with a sparrow in a cage—and she has a will of her own, or I am much mistaken."

Now, as it was one of Mrs. Reginald's weaknesses never to be mistaken, Mrs. Dorrien knew what that meant. She looked more anxious, more nervous than ever.

"How do you think John likes her?" she asked.

"My dear, how can I tell? A man of twenty-four or so, and a woman of fifty-odd, don't look at a girl of eighteen from the same end of the telescope."

There was not much in this to comfort Mrs. Dorrien, nor, when, on learning that Antoinette was in her room, she went there to welcome her, did the young girl's manner and bearing make her feel easier in her mind.

Antoinette's room was on the second floor of the house; it faced the west and overlooked the garden. It was a handsome room, and, with Mr. Dorrien's approval, but at John's suggestion, Mrs. Reginald had added a few pretty trifles to it, and thus given it a youthful, girlish aspect.

Antoinette was looking at an exquisite little bronze paper-weight, and had not yet put it down out of her hand, when Mrs. Dorrien entered her room and greeted her with a kind and maternal, but not very truthful, "My dear child, how glad I am to have you back again!"

Antoinette smiled, and returned this welcome very prettily—for there was something sweet and amiable about her

—but also very quietly, and still holding the paper-weight (two greyhounds playing together) in her hand.

"That is John's choice," quickly said Mrs. Dorrien, smiling.

"Mr. Dorrien is very kind," replied Antoinette; but she put down the handsome trifle with unmistakable indifference.

"How altered you are!" resumed Mrs. Dorrien, looking at her from a distance—"how improved! I should never have known you."

Antoinette smiled, but did not seem inclined to respond to Mrs. Dorrien's advances. It was plain that she took every attention and every civil speech as a matter of course. She was Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter, coming back to Mr. Dorrien's house, and she knew it. Mrs. Dorrien looked at her, still smiling, but with uneasiness in her smile. Was this girl of eighteen—this little red and white thing, as Mrs. Reginald called her—going to cast her shadow between John and the sun of Mr. Dorrien's favor? Truly that would be hard.

"You are tired, dear," she said, gently. "I shall let you rest; only I could not resist the impulse of coming up to you."

"You are very good," softly replied Antoinette. "Do you know if Mr. Dorrien has come in yet?"

"He is out for the day, my dear; you took us all by surprise, you know. But," she added, seeing a little cloud casting its shadow on Antoinette's clear brow, "Mr. Dorrien will be in for dinner, of course. Shall I send you word when he returns?"

"Thank you," quietly replied Antoinette, "I dare say he will send for me."

"Then *au revoir*, dear," said Mrs. Dorrien, ignoring this check. "Oh, what a darling little bird! Mind Mr. Dorrien's favorite cat, dear." And with this warning she kindly pressed the young girl's hand and left her.

Mr. Dorrien did not come in till a few minutes before dinner, and he entered the library rather hastily for one usually so composed and languid.

"What is this Mr. Brown tells me?" he exclaimed, addressing John, who was bending over his desk—"Miss Dorrien has actually arrived!"

"She came an hour ago," replied John, leaning back in his chair, and noting the angry flush on Mr. Dorrien's brow.

Mr. Dorrien was angry. He had contemplated being unexpectedly called away an hour before his granddaughter's arrival, and he felt annoyed at being balked; but he seldom or never expressed displeasure, and he did not do so now.

"Do tell me what this means, John," he said, rather fretfully. "Mr. Brown knows nothing about it."

He handed his cousin a letter which had been directed to him by mistake. John smiled, said he would see to the matter, then added:

"Miss Dorrien has been resting some time; do you wish to see her now, sir?"

"It will do when Miss Dorrien comes down to dinner," carelessly answered Mr. Dorrien, looking at the clock. "Are you fast or slow, John?"

"Neither, sir."

"Oh, you go like the sun! Well, then, we shall soon meet, for Mrs. Reginald is punctuality itself."

"I am afraid her journey has fatigued Miss Dorrien," remarked John, still pressing Antoinette on her grandfather's attention; "she looks pale."

Mr. Dorrien compared his watch with the clock, and, ignoring John's remark, said he was decidedly slow, and left the library to dress for dinner.

The pretty sitting-room on the ground-floor where Mr. Dorrien's family always met before dinner, was vacant when John entered it this evening. His mother and Mrs. Reginald had already passed into the dining-room, where he heard them talking, and Mr. Dorrien and Antoinette were not yet come. He sat down, and was looking out of the window, half hidden by its heavy curtains, when the door opened, and Antoinette entered. Her plain black dress fell down to her feet in Quakeress-like simplicity of outline; her narrow collar and cuffs were of a dead white, unrelieved by lace or edging; she wore neither ring, nor brooch, nor ear-rings of any kind. She might not possess them; but John thought that she looked as if the heavy plaits of dark hair which adorned her young head were the only ornaments she would care to wear.

She did not see him till he rose to greet her, and then she drew back with a little start of shy surprise. Before John had time to address her, and, while he was handing her a chair, the ladies in the next room, who had been talking of other matters, had made some unfortunate remarks.

"And so he has not seen her?" said Mrs. John Dorrien.

"Not he," replied Mrs. Reginald. "The young lady will find that *our* Mr. Dorrien is not exactly what she takes him for."

"Thank you, I do not care to sit down," answered Antoinette, with a raised color, declining the chair which John had brought forward. "I believe this is the way;" and she walked straight to the velvet hangings, and, passing through them, appeared before Mrs. Reginald.

Mrs. Dorrien looked confused, but Mrs. Reginald was not a whit dismayed, and only remarked, as she saw Antoinette:

"My dear Miss Dorrien, are you in mourning?"

"No," answered Antoinette, whose lips quivered a little, "I am not; but I have been." And her voice sank sadly.

"Why, my dear child," said Mrs. Reginald, kindly, but decisively, "if you are not in mourning pray go up to your room and put on some little bit of pink, or blue, or scarlet, or any thing, for Mr. Dorrien has a perfect horror of black."

Antoinette drew herself up rather haughtily.

"I am sorry," she said, "I have nothing of the kind."

"Well, then, take these roses.—John, come here like a good lad, and prick your fingers for me," said Mrs. Reginald, calling out the young man who had remained in the next room, and now appeared at her summons. "I suppose you provided our *épergne* with these roses in Miss Dorrien's honor?"

John did not answer, but drew out two bright roses from the crystal épergne and silently handed them to Mrs. Reginald. She walked up with them to Antoinette, as if they were offensive weapons, and, leading her to a mirror, said decisively:

"Now where shall I put this one in for you? I suppose your hair is all your own?"

Antoinette, who had looked somewhat distant, and on the defensive, suddenly relaxed, and laughed gayly at Mrs.

Reginald's question, and, taking the roses from that lady's hand, promptly fastened one in the thick masses of her wavy hair, and slipped the other into the front of her black dress.

"Will that do?" she asked, turning round again, and speaking rather mockingly.

Before Mrs. Reginald could answer, Mr. Dorrien's tall figure appeared in the opening made by the velvet hangings, and he paused there for a moment, looking at them all with something like displeasure, and at Antoinette with marked coldness. Whether her black dress annoyed him, as Mrs. Reginald had foreseen that it would, or whether he thought she took too great a liberty in adorning herself with flowers from his table, certain it was that his calm blue eyes rested on his granddaughter with so little friendliness that the young girl, who had taken two steps toward him, paused irresolute in the middle of the room.

"You are welcome, my dear Antoinette," he said; but never was welcome so icily uttered. "I did not expect you, however, before to-morrow."

"I am sorry," answered Antoinette, in a low tone, "but my aunt would have it so."

"I was not aware that Mademoiselle Mélanie—I believe that is the lady's name—was your aunt," said Mr. Dorrien, in his most measured accents.

Antoinette did not reply. He color faded, her eyes grew dim. She stood before her grandfather in mute and girlish helplessness. There was something about her so gentle and so youthful in its gentleness, that it went straight to John Dorrien's heart.

"Perhaps Mademoiselle Mélanie did not wish Miss Dorrien to arrive to-morrow," he suggested, smiling. "Friday is an unlucky day, you know, sir."

Mr. Dorrien condescended to relent.

"Well, my dear," he said, holding out his hand to his granddaughter, drawing her toward him, and printing a cold kiss on her forehead, "you are welcome, Thursday or Friday.—I believe I am late, Mrs. Reginald.—John, you will sit next your cousin, I suppose?"

His manner was courteous now, and, for one habitually so reserved, pleasant; but first impressions are deep and strong at the age of Antoinette, and never so long as their

intercourse lasted could she get over the coldness of Mr. Dorrien's welcome. And yet, as we said, his manner underwent a marked change. Youth is a sweet and lovely thing in itself, and, when Antoinette took her place at her grandfather's table, she looked a charming and pleasant addition to the family group. Her black dress set off the lily fairness of her skin; her cheek was fresh as the rose in her hair, her features were not very regular, indeed, but her eyes were soft and bright, and she had the sweetest of smiles, and a dimple in her little chin, and the most beautiful dark hair, and the prettiest neck, in the world. The background behind her set off this youthful grace and beauty. The large oak dresser, rich and brown in hue, and carved with griffins and chimeras, seemed to have been put there on purpose to show how young and dainty and graceful was Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter. And Mr. Dorrien, as we said, looked graciously upon her. His eye was pleased with Antoinette, and his taste approved of her. She was feminine and attractive, and, though she was a little silent, she looked clever, and yet refined. Mr. Dorrien detested any thing in the shape of a blue-stocking, but he was too intellectual himself to like a simpleton. His own wife had been eminently feminine, pleasing, and in her way—a feminine way—accomplished. At the same time it was a great relief to him to find, in the course of conversation, that Antoinette knew nothing of music. He congratulated her on having escaped such a calamity.

"Think how invaluable is the blessing of never being a bore to your friends," he remarked; "of never hearing most false civil speeches, of never being entreated to sing or play, while the ardent wish that you should decline the request is felt all the time by your petitioners!"

"I might play alone," replied Antoinette, who colored slightly.

"You might, but people never do," was the quiet rejoinder.

There was just a flash which shot through Antoinette's dark eyes, but she looked at her plate, and was silent; indeed, it was a silent meal. John Dorrien, and his mother saw it with some uneasiness, was attentive to all his young cousin's wants, but otherwise he did not intrude himself *upon her.* He seemed to think that, when he did not suffer

her glass to be empty, and saw that her plate was heaped, he had fulfilled all his duty to her. Mrs. Dorrien remembered how determinedly, in the days gone by, the young man had set his face against Antoinette, and, though she hoped that his position in his cousin's house was a safe one, she also thought that, not to displease Mr. Dorrien, if it were possible, would be the wisest plan for John.

There was a change for the better after dinner. Out of compliment to his granddaughter, no doubt, Mr. Dorrien condescended to spend an hour in Mrs. Reginald's sitting-room that evening. Of his own accord, he languidly suggested that Antoinette should see the sights. Mr. Dorrien himself had no time to accompany his granddaughter, of course, but Mrs. John would take her to the churches, and John would spare a few hours, he was sure, to accompany her, when the fatigue was too much for his mother.

Mrs. Dorrien looked nervously at her son. He was so dreadfully straightforward, was poor John—quite capable of saying, "I am very sorry, but just now I have no time." Even if he did consent, would his consent be gracious? Well, there was nothing equivocal about his agreement with Mr. Dorrien's suggestion. His gray eyes smiled as he turned to Antoinette, and he declared himself most happy to do the honors of Paris and its environs to his cousin. Miss Dorrien thanked him demurely, but her pretty head was averted, and her dark eyes looked straight before her at the little clock on the mantel-piece. If such a thing had been possible, Mrs. Dorrien would have fancied that Antoinette had no wish to see Paris; but John soon roused her from her indifference, or, rather, he soon discovered that it was apparent, not real. He went and sat by her, and engaged her in conversation. With what should they begin?—with the churches, the palaces, or the museums? Did she like pictures? Would she prefer the public gardens first? In short, what should they do on the morrow? At first Antoinette declared that she liked every thing in a way that meant she liked nothing: but soon her manner thawed, her face turned to John's, its delicate bloom deepened, her eyes laughed, her lips smiled, she was beaming, and that expectation of pleasure which is so keen and so charming at eighteen shone in her whole aspect.

John's voice, though clear, was never loud; the room

was large, and Mr. Dorrien's chair stood far away from the low couch on which the two cousins were sitting. He knew the purport of their discourse, but he knew no more. He watched their fresh, eager young faces with languid interest, as a wearied traveler, sitting on low twilight shores, may watch the sunlight shining on other journeyers, and see them set off in its fervid glow for the happy mountains far away. Well, they, too, will be tired yet, ardent and joyous though they are now; they, too, will long for rest before those fair summits are reached; they, too, will see that the beauty and the glory of those heavenly heights vanish on a near view.

Yet how pleased they both looked!—how soft were the broken murmurs of their two voices, Antoinette's so sweet and girlish, John's so fine, so clear, so mellow! Did they so soon like each other? They looked like it, foolish, simple young things, so ready for the nonsense of love. It was what he had once wished for, yet the thought of the coming courtship and love-making cloyed on him as sweetness may cloy on a sick palate, and there was just a touch of sarcasm in his voice as he said aloud:

"Pray may a third person venture to know what you are going to do to-morrow?"

Antoinette and John exchanged a conscious look, and laughed in unison. Mr. Dorrien half raised himself in his arm-chair, and gazed at them with his wearied blue eyes, that always seemed as if they had been looking at the world so long. It was John who answered.

"We have just agreed to take a cab and go off in the morning without knowing whither, like the people in the fairy tales."

"Did they take cabs?" asked Mr. Dorrien, dryly.

"No, of course not," cried Antoinette, clapping her hands; "and, John" (the old familiar name seemed to slip out), "we will not take a cab; we will go on foot, and trust to Fate, and, as I shall lead you, we shall be sure to go astray, and we shall get desperately hungry, and—"

Mr. Dorrien raised his hands.

"There, there," he said, languidly, "I ask to know no more; you have conjured up a vision of horrors. Hungry in Paris! Well, my dear, only please to find your way

back for our seven-o'clock dinner, and to remember that I never wait five minutes for living creature."

Antoinette colored a little, and looked at her grandfather, then at John. Had her little flight of fancy been so indecorous that there was need for Mr. Dorrien to speak so sourly? Her eyes sought John Dorrien's in silent questioning, and his answered her kindly. Very plainly they said, "No, there was no harm in it—do not mind." Even more than this it seemed to Antoinette that the kind, handsome eyes told her.

"Do not be afraid," they appeared to say. "Never fear any thing or any one in this house. Am I not your friend, and will I not always be so?"

That such was their meaning it seemed to Antoinette on that first day, and that she had read them truly she learned again and again in Mr. Dorrien's house.

CHAPTER XXII.

THAT pretense to avoid the society of his granddaughter for a few days, at least, which Mr. Dorrien had meant to invent, came to him, the very next morning, without any wish on his part. Little as he interfered with business now, it was necessary for him to be absent a week, and he was even compelled to leave his home without seeing Antoinette, or holding with her a conversation as to her exact position in her new home, which something in her manner made him think imperatively necessary.

Miss Dorrien did not miss her grandfather. There is no denying that her face cleared when she came down to breakfast and learned that he was gone.

"But you shall not miss your holiday, dear," said Mrs. Dorrien, graciously. "John will give us this day, will he not, dear John, and we shall have the carriage, and go and see the sights?"

John smiled kindly, but a sudden cloud, as of annoyance or restraint, passed over Antoinette's bright face. It was soon gone, not so soon, though, that John did not see it,

and wonder why the pleasant mood of the evening had not outlived the night.

"I wish you joy," here remarked Mrs. Reginald. 'Sight-seeing is a grand invention for fatigue and loss of time combined in one.—By-the-way, my dear, were you in the garden this morning?"

She addressed Antoinette, who deliberately went on sipping her coffee before she answered:

"No, Mrs. Reginald, I was not."

"Why does she deny it?" thought John, who, sitting in the library at his early work, had seen her flitting about the alleys, and watched her graceful young figure with pleasure.

"And did you see any one? And if it was not Antoinette, who could it be?" asked Mrs. Dorrien, with sudden uneasiness.

"Her fetch, my dear," dryly answered Mrs. Reginald. "The world is full of fetches, indeed, and some people have an unusual share of them. You think they are here—bless you, no such thing, they were there all the time!"

This was said so pointedly, and with so boring an eye fastened upon Antoinette, that the young girl put down her cup with a half-frightened air.

"I shall soon be at your commands, little mother," said John, hastening to change the subject.

"And we shall soon be ready, dear," replied his mother, in equal hurry to interfere with Mrs. Reginald's warlike propensities.

Antoinette said nothing, but rose at once, and silently left the room.

"I am not sure, after all, that I saw her," said Mrs. Reginald, with some compunction, "but I certainly did see something very like her in the garden this morning."

"Ah, indeed you did," thought John, ruefully. "And why did she deny it?"

"I shall be ready in five minutes, dear," said his mother, as she passed by his chair, looking fondly down in his thoughtful face. "And you know, dear," she hesitatingly added, "that it is quite as great a trial to me as it is to you."

She evidently considered him as great a victim to the *duty of escorting* Antoinette as she considered herself one

to that of chaperoning Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter. John could not help smiling at her strange misapprehension of his feelings. It did seem strange that neither his mother nor Mrs. Reginald should guess that he cared for this young girl. Mrs. Reginald was ready to attack her right and left, and his mother spoke of accompanying her as of a burden to be borne, or a task to be gone through. And yet what pleasure had his youth known that he should not enjoy the relaxation of a pretty girl's company, and not feel the charm of her youth and freshness? He could not imagine why she had uttered that foolish untruth, but when she came down and joined his mother and him, and walked down the *perron* by his side, with a light and dainty step, looking so demure as she drew on her gloves, he forgave her; and when they entered the carriage and drove away, John, sitting opposite Antoinette, and looking in her soft, dark eyes, forgot all about it.

"And now, my dear boy," said Mrs. Dorrien, shutting her eyes and leaning back in the carriage with a wearied sigh, "now take us where you like, and tell dear Antoinette about every thing."

John did as he was bid, and he began by taking Antoinette over the old ground which he knew so well. Once they entered on the sight-seeing, Antoinette's gravity thawed and vanished like snow in the sunshine. Her eyes sparkled, her face beamed, her little, nervous hands shook with excitement.

"The Temple? Was that the Temple?" and she looked up in the air for an invisible dungeon.

"My dear, there is not a fragment of it left," pettishly said Mrs. Dorrien.

"Yes, but it was here," quickly replied Antoinette; "this is the very spot."

The broad sunlit place on which the Bastille once stood possessed the same incontrovertible charm. The great prison-house in which Latude ate his heart away has vanished. A tall column, with no austere figure on the top, but with an airy genius of Liberty, brightly gilt, shaking his defiant torch over the city, and looking very ready to take wing and seek some other region, marks the spot where the mediæval fortress once frowned. Antoinette, who had been a decided royalist at the Temple Gardens,

here became a vehement little democrat. Mrs. Dorrien looked uncomfortable, but John only smiled. He was still young in years, but hard work, business, and dealings with men, had blunted the early keenness of his feelings. He found it pleasant to watch the manifestations of inexperience so complete as that of Antoinette. The freshness which could resist the commonplace nineteenth-century aspect of the Place de la Bastille with its great glare of light, its omnibuses and railway-stations, and conjure up in their stead the long-departed stronghold of despotic power, amused him. Something of this Antoinette was quick to detect in his smile—something, but not all.

"I suppose it is very foolish in me to think so much of what people suffered long ago," she said in a little injured tone, "but I cannot help it."

"My dear, it is not foolish," said Mrs. Dorrien, uneasily; "no one thinks so, only you see they were not all angels that were shut in there."

"I am sure they were all innocent," cried Antoinette, warmly; "all victims of kings and ministers and favorites."

"Madame de Brinvilliers, for instance," said John.

"Well, perhaps she did not poison people after all," persisted Antoinette:

Mrs. John Dorrien opened her eyes, but John composedly remarked:

"Perhaps she did not. There are two terrible drawings of her by Lebrun in the Louvre. In one she leans back on a pillow with a cross in her hand, her face still gasping with the pain of recent torture. In the other she is going to the scaffold, with all the horror of her coming doom in her staring eyes and parted lips. When you see this last drawing, Miss Dorrien, note the cruel profile, and perhaps you will agree with Lebrun himself, who thought that Madame de Brinvilliers was very like a tigress."

Antoinette was startled, but she soon rallied, and said demurely—

"Perhaps he made her so, Mr. Dorrien."

"Oh, come!" exclaimed Mrs. Dorrien, trying to be very friendly and easy, "no more Miss Dorriens or Mr. Dorriens, if you please.—And, John, my dear boy, tell Antoinette something pleasant, and show her some nice bits of old *Paris*. Has she seen the Place Royale?"

"My dear mother, it is all very well to look at the Place Royale now, with its quaint old houses, and its look of decayed greatness, and think it pleasant; but remember the duels that were fought there!—not tame duels, with just one pistol-shot or a sword-thrust, but regular encounters on horseback, where the seconds fought on their own account, as well as the principals."

"Oh, dear, how dreadful!" cried Antoinette, with a shudder; but in the same breath she added, "Is it nigh here, Mr. Dorrien?—John, I mean."

"Close by, if you wish to see it."

Almost as he spoke they entered the Place, and drove slowly round it. The spot was quiet. The heavy-built old houses, with their steep roofs, were sleeping lazily in the sun; the galleries on the ground-floor looked dark, rather damp, and deserted; the little inclosed garden in the centre had a forlorn aspect. Every thing spoke now of tame, sedate, *bourgeois* ways; and it was hard to believe that hot-blooded young men had once come here in the early morning, and, more for the love of fighting than for hate or for honor, wakened the echoes of the now tranquil dwellings with the clash of their swords, and dyed the stones of the pavement with their blood. What frenzy possessed them? Were they not nobly born, rich, and young? What more would they have had? Why must they rush so eagerly to those fatal conflicts, where wounds were almost always deadly and where the scaffold often awaited the survivor?

John told Antoinette the story of some of those famous duels, then he made her alight to look at the white equestrian statue of Louis XIII. in the garden. The king who with ruthless hand put down those unhallowed encounters now guards the spot where they oftenest took place. He wears the long flowing locks and cavalier garb of his fiery contemporaries; but for his look of calm command, you might take that young man, with the clear, handsome profile, for one of those ill-fated gentlemen whom he sent to the block.

"How cruel he must have been!" indignantly said Antoinette.

"Hard, not cruel," corrected John.

"My dear, is not all this rather dreary?" said Mrs.

Dorrien, when they joined her again. "Can you not tell your cousin something pleasant out of the past?"

"The Past is very jealous of his pleasant things, little mother, and keeps them as hidden as the sea keeps its pearls. But, as for its wickednesses, the hoary old sinner lays them bare before us with unblushing coolness."

"Yes, but duels are horrible things," persisted Mrs. Dorrien; "let us have a look at the Seine—at any thing."

When Antoinette saw the beautiful river flowing between its churches and its palaces, and spreading its azure bosom beneath the golden sun, she was at first mute with admiration and delight; and when she spoke it was to say under her breath:

"How beautiful! how grand! And this church far away is Notre-Dame, you say; and this is the Louvre; and what church is this? The oldest in Paris? Oh, yes, do let us see it!"

If John had asked her to climb to the top of Notre-Dame, to see all the pictures in the Louvre, or to go and look at all the animals in the Jardin des Plantes, she would have uttered as cheerful a yes, so eager was the sight-seeing appetite of this young creature on the first day of her Paris experiences. The little Place facing the church was very peaceful at this hour. On a bench in the shade of the horse-chestnut trees, whose red, withered leaves strewed the earth, sat a pale old man in a black-silk cap, and a middle-aged woman knitting a blue stocking, and looking at two children playing. It was all as tranquil as though the roar of the great city were not going on hard by. Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, though ancient, has not remained unchanged. But notwithstanding this inevitable destiny, it still has an impressive and characteristic aspect. Through the arches of the covered gallery, which extends in front of the church, the tarnished gilding and fading red and azure of the mediæval porch take one back to those by-gone ages when color reveled in all its splendor, and the cold grayness of stone had not yet prevailed over it. Within the church it is all a rich gloom of low arch and stained glass, never to be forgotten—a gloom which fills the side aisles and chapels, and pervades the place. Antoinette peeped in curiously at the sculptured tombs in one chapel. It was open, and a man in a blue apron was dip-

ping a brush in a pail of water, and cleaning the white marble effigy of a gentleman who evidently had never belonged to the nineteenth century. But, though he had been dead some two or three hundred years, he was still taking his ease in an attitude of graceful repose. He was half sitting up, leaning on his left elbow, with a roll of paper in his hand, and his other hand resting on an open volume before him. He had a comely face and a good profile, and Antoinette seemed pleased to see him made neat and trim by the brush and water of the man in the blue apron, who, on being questioned, informed her that his name was Restang—"And that is his brother," he added, pointing with his brush to a kneeling figure on the other side of the chapel. "I shall do him by-and-by."

The kneeling gentleman, who clasped a book to his heart, and was by no means so good-looking as the recumbent one, seemed much in the need of a scrubbing.

"You would like to see him done too, would you not?" whispered John.

Antoinette would have liked it dearly, but she resisted the temptation, and turned away with a "No, thank you" more heroic than truthful. She seemed inclined to become more cool and self-possessed, but it would not do; the brightness of the Rue de Rivoli, the stateliness of the Tuileries, the verdure of its gardens, with sparkling fountains and white statues shining in the sun, enchanted her.

When the carriage took her slowly round the wide Place de la Concorde, with its obelisk, its statues of French cities, and its fountains, and when John told her that on this spot, so bright, so gay, a king's blood had been shed, and a queen had died on the same scaffold; when he told her the name and history of every building, dome, and tower, rising into blue air above the dimness of the city roofs, Antoinette seemed to be listening to some wonderful romance. Again and again her little gloved hands twitched in her lap, and her red lips quivered as she listened to him with grave, intent eyes.

"There, that will do for this morning," said Mrs. Dorrien. "Take us to the wood, dear. I think you promised us luncheon there, did you not?"

So, from the brightness of white-stone buildings and sunny streets, they passed into the shade and freshness of

the wood. How green, how tranquil seemed these long avenues ending in a bright spot of light! Never, thought Antoinette, accustomed to the luxuriant vegetation of her southern home, but not familiar yet with the cool and dewy charm of the northern verdure—never had there been any thing so poetic and so fair in those sylvan shades through which flowed silent streams, with the whitest of swans and the fairest of wild-fowl on their bosom. John took his mother and his cousin to the same restaurant where he had gone to seek Mr. Dorrien on that eventful day that had turned the tide of his destiny.

"You do not know what that day has been to you as well as to me," he thought, as he looked at Antoinette's young face. "I wonder what you would say if you knew that your fate was decided in this very room seven years ago—your fate as well as mine?"

Unconscious of the turn his thoughts were taking, Antoinette was leaning out of the window, feeding the ducks and laughing carelessly. She seemed merry, happy, and at her ease, and when luncheon was over, and Mrs. Dorrien suggested that she should take a walk with John, the young girl made no difficulty, but gayly consented. So they went out together, and, as they stepped forth in the shade, Antoinette could not help saying, "Mrs. Dorrien was right. My feet were longing to be on the grass. This *is* delightful!"

"You must often come here with my mother," he said, kindly.

"I suppose *you* cannot come—I mean you are too busy," doubtfully remarked Antoinette.

"Yes, I have a good deal to do."

"And you get up ever so early," said she, gravely—"at six, don't you?"

He looked at her; she colored and laughed.

"I was up early myself this morning," she said, stooping to pick up a daisy. "You cannot imagine what a contrast this place is to La Ruya," she quickly added. "I feel quite surprised to find a daisy."

The little white flower shook in her hand, and there was something almost frightened in her face as she spoke. But John Dorrien seemed unconscious of her flurried and alarmed manner, and smiled at the little starry blossom

which she held. He smiled, but, swift and keen as an arrow shot by an unerring hand, came the thought, "Poor little innocent daisy, you helped to hide a fib just then."

The beauty of the day was gone for him—for Antoinette, too, it seemed to have departed. She asked to go back to Mrs. Dorrien, and when that lady gently scolded her for returning so soon, assuring her she could have seen nothing, it was almost petulantly that Antoinette answered she had seen plenty. Mrs. Dorrien was troubled. Had these two been differing already? In her anxiety to efface any unfortunate impression which John might have made on his cousin's mind, she suggested, and indeed insisted, that he should end the day by driving them round to look at the Invalides. John assented, and, though Antoinette uttered a feeble disclaimer, the temptation of seeing something new was not to be resisted.

The hour for seeing the tomb of the first Napoleon was over, the gorgeous chapel was closed, but the home of the old soldiers was still open. Antoinette gazed with awe at the historical cannons which guard the entrance to the gardens.

"And that is a cannon!" she cried. "I never saw a cannon before. O John, do tell me all about this one, please."

"My dear cousin, there is not much to tell. This particular cannon belongs to the reign of the great monarch who built this very Hôtel des Invalides. There is his emblem, the sun in full beam, with the *Nec pluribus impar*, which no one can make out, so pray excuse me. Oh! *this* Latin motto is very easily read," he added, smiling, as Antoinette bent over another cannon—"it means the last argument of kings."

"That is to say, that, when every thing else fails, it must come to fighting," suggested Antoinette.

"You have defined it very accurately," answered John. "*Ultima ratio regum* means that, and nothing else."

With much indignation, the young girl declared that it was abominable.

"Do you think so?" asked John, smiling.

"Don't you?" was her retort, with just a little scornful curl of her lip.

"Certainly not. I think fighting the legitimate end of

all argument. It must always come to that, and all human and divine things must end in the triumph of strength."

"So you worship strength?" said she.

"I do," was the unhesitating reply. "And I think that truth is very strong," added John, in a tranquil, even voice.

Antoinette looked at him with uneasy wonder in her dark eyes, like one who has heard some speech of an unknown tongue, but she did not pursue the argument. On either side of the gravel path leading to the building spread gay parterres, and on either side of these again are the little gardens of the old soldiers. John took her to look at them, while his mother sat on a bench in the sun.

"Go on, and do not mind me," she said. "You will find me in the chapel, when you have seen all that is worth seeing."

The narrow strips of ground through which John and his cousin passed were very different in aspect. Some were charmingly neat and trim, and others were all weeds and neglect. Some, too, were decidedly culinary. Parsley abounded in one, and another was given up to strawberries. With the taste of this warrior Antoinette could sympathize, for, as she confidentially informed John, she was very fond of strawberries herself, but it puzzled her to think what that neighbor of his could do with all the parsley he grew. This mystery being far beyond John's depth, he did not even attempt to explain it, but led his cousin through the vast building. Every thing interested and amused her, especially the kitchen, with its huge *marmite*. She looked at the plate in the room in which it is kept; she peeped in at the refectory; she saw the old men gathering together at the beat of the drum, one-eyed, one-armed, and one-legged, sad tokens of that argument of kings which she had so vehemently condemned; and, when she had seen all, they went to the chapel, a cold, white building, where dusty flags hung heavily in the sunshine, streaming upon them through the tall windows. How calmly and silently they faded away up there, those poor little bits of colored cloth, to keep or win which lives had been given! Dull though they looked, they had been dyed in the red heart's blood of a nation, and now the fierce breezes of battle *would never* fan them again; for the dun smoke of powder

they had the faint breath of incense; for the cannon's roar, the solemn voice of the organ; for the love and honor that had once borne them so high, the boast of the victorious stranger, who had hung them up there as trophies in the temple of his God.

Antoinette looked up at all these relics of by-gone warfare, trying to make them out, till her head ached, and she was glad to leave off and join Mrs. Dorrien, who was kneeling near the altar.

"And now we have done our sight-seeing for to-day," said Mrs. Dorrien, with a sigh of relief, as they drove home, "and I hope, dear, that you liked it."

Antoinette, with every appearance of sincerity, declared that she was delighted; and she was even more explicit to John himself, when they met again in the little sitting-room before dinner. They were alone. Mrs. Dorrien's sight-seeing had been too much for her. She had sent word that she could not come down, and Mrs. Reginald, darting a severe look at Antoinette, as much as to say, "That is your work," had left the room to go up to "poor dear Mrs. John," and regulate her bill of fare. It was then that Antoinette spoke. She sat by the fireplace, looking at the low wood-fire, with a pleased smile on her lips. The lamp burned on the central table with a mild glow; the warm and cheerful coloring of the little room was around the young girl, and now and then a flame shot up from the hearth, and lit up her face, that fair, girlish face, which John, sitting on the other side of the hearth, now strove to read. For good or for evil it had come across his life, and it was much to him.

"How delightful it has been to-day!" said Antoinette, suddenly looking up. "I don't know how to thank you, John."

"For what?"

"Oh! for every thing. It is delightful to go over a grand old city like this with you. You bring back the past, and make it present and living again."

"Then let us have many such days," he suggested.

"Oh! yes," she willingly responded, "let us. I could go on forever, you know."

She laughed, a clear silvery laugh, which reminded John of that afternoon when he had seen her sitting on the wall reading the little yellow volume of Tauchnitz. And yet

how unlike she was what he had imagined her to be even then! There was something very fearless and open about this young girl, in spite of these two untruths; no awkward shyness, and yet plenty of reticence and reserve. Her looks, her manners, were as easy and as free as if she had lived in the world all her life. Her mind might not have been cultivated according to the approved methods, but it was a clear, firm mind, and Mademoiselle Antoinette seemed to have stored it with plenty of information. John had found her familiar with almost every topic which that day had suggested. She had made no display of her little knowledge. She seemed unconscious that it was not expected of her, and she wore it naturally, as rich women wear silks and jewels. There was also in her manner to himself something which John had not expected. It was amiable and sweet, but it was of a sweetness, he felt, in which he, as an individual, had no part. The vainest coxcomb who ever lived could not have appropriated the sunshine of that young girl's looks and smiles. She seemed no more to care on whom they fell than a rose may care what winds receive its fragrance. "She is very winning," he said in his own thoughts, "but she does not want to win or to be won."

Winning though he thought Antoinette, the young girl had not fascinated his mother. Mrs. John Dorrien was full of trouble and care about Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter, and when her friend entered the room with a cheering, "Well, dear, and what will you have?" her answer was a somewhat dolorous "Oh! any thing, dear," so suggestive of anxiety that, dropping all thought of proposing a chicken and Burgundy as restoratives, Mrs. Reginald at once sat down opposite Mrs. Dorrien, and, looking at her sideways, said emphatically:

"What! have they been worrying you?"

"Oh! my dear Mrs. Reginald, she has not done it intentionally, poor little thing; but I am very, very anxious."

"About her, of course?"

"About her and John. It will never do—never. He is so dreadfully plain-spoken, poor John! and so austere, too, you know, that he will be sure to be too honest with Mr. Dorrien."

"Well, but about what, dear?"

"Why, you see, the poor child had been reared by that dreadful woman; and we visited two churches to-day, and I could see in her whole manner that she has not a bit of religion."

Mrs. Reginald whistled.

"Now, you know, if dear John will ever marry a girl of that sort, and if he will not, why, Mr. Dorrien will be affronted."

"Do you think he cares much for the young lady?" asked Mrs. Reginald. "I don't, though even his cat does. Strange! she has already taken to the child, and rubs up to her quite amiably. And she has pretty ways with her, has Miss Dorrien. She has almost coaxed back her old Carlo. Yes, she has pretty ways with her. As I passed her room this morning the door was ajar, and I saw her within. She stood in the light of a sunbeam that came in through the window, with that sparrow of hers on her finger, and she did not look a bad child, Mrs. John; but it is hard lines on a young thing to be badly reared, you see."

Mrs. John confessed it was, and again reverted to John's austerity and Mr. Dorrien's possible displeasure.

"Never mind, dear; eat your dinner, and don't take it to heart," said Mrs. Reginald, rising and speaking in her most cheering accents. "A little heathen is she? Well, then, I'll convert her, and I'll begin this very evening. Don't be frightened; I shall be very quiet about it."

To be quiet, amiable, seductive, and calm, to conquer Antoinette's heathenism by fascination as much as by argument, was indeed Mrs. Reginald's wise intention. How did it happen, alas! that instead of attaining this desirable object, she had something very like a quarrel with Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter that same evening?

Alas! how does it come to pass that our best and most benevolent intentions are so often defeated?

The dinner went off very well. Mrs. Reginald drew out Antoinette, and made her talk of what she had seen, listened with real, not feigned, interest to the young girl's vivacious account of the day's sights, made John talk too, and show off to advantage, which he could do, having the gift of easy speech and quick repartee, and altogether was so agreeable, that Miss Dorrien got quite accustomed to her formidable appearance, and looked at her without a trace

of uneasiness. Every thing, as we say, went off charmingly while John was present. It was only when the ladies were alone that they differed.

John went to work after dinner. His mother remained in her room, Antoinette joined Mrs. Reginald in that lady's sitting-room. As she opened the door and entered, she was rather surprised to find Mrs. Reginald surveying various ladies' dresses in the piece, and which lay spread out on the back of her dark sofa, displaying their vivid hues in the lamp-light.

"Now, my dear, here's a choice for you," said Mrs. Reginald, beckoning her to her side, "blue, very handsome; mauve, charming, but rather light; bottle-green, too dark; purple, too garish; gray, too dull. Take the blue, dear. A handsome poplin—Irish, of course. Your mother was of Irish stock. You will look very well in it."

Antoinette remained silent for a minute, during which she colored steadily; then she said, quietly.

"Thank you; I do not wish to wear blue."

She sat down without giving any of the dresses a look.

"My dear, your grandfather objects to black," composedly remarked Mrs. Reginald. "I chose these colors for you, but, if you like another better, say so. To be sure I did not ask for pink, or red, never having fancied them much myself."

"I like nothing so well as black," replied Antoinette, a little coldly.

"That, my dear, has very little to do with the business," sarcastically retorted Mrs. Reginald, "and her likes or dislikes are the last thing a young thing like you should consult."

Antoinette looked at her in some wonder, but she did not lose her temper. All she said was:

"I am really very much obliged to you for the trouble you have taken, Mrs. Reginald, but what am I to do? I really dislike all these colored dresses, and I really do like black."

"My dear"—with much asperity—"your grandfather cannot endure black, and you *must* not wear it."

Antoinette smiled with perfect good temper, and said, quite calmly:

"*If Mr.* Dorrien will not let me wear black, let him tell

me what color I am to wear, and I will—even blue—much though I dislike it.'

This way of settling the question was very baffling. It was also irritating. Few people like to have their taste censured, and of these few Mrs. Reginald was not one. And then to have a little chit of a thing like this girl setting up to having a will of her own was rather too much. Unluckily she could not say, with any regard to truth, that Mr. Dorrien had actually requested her to change the hue of his granddaughter's attire. All he had said was, as he placed a certain sum of money in her hands on the morning of his sudden departure:

"Will you kindly see that Miss Dorrien is provided with whatever she may require?" Which did not exactly mean, "Will you see that Miss Dorrien no longer wears black?" In short, Mrs. Reginald had gone too far. She knew it, and was exceedingly affronted with Antoinette's quiet rebuff.

"Oh, very well, my dear!" said she, loftily, sweeping away the dresses, and tossing them in a heap as she spoke, "very well, please yourself. It is a very good rule, when one can put it into practice."

"Well, I really think it is," good-humoredly replied Antoinette.

Mrs. Reginald sat down without deigning her any answer; but, of course, after so unpropitious a beginning, she could not attempt to convert Antoinette.

CHAPTER XXIII.

UNTOWARD circumstances may sometimes delay a declaration of war, but we all know that when a monarch, a nation, or an individual, is bent upon it, war is an inevitable catastrophe. Mrs. Reginald was determined to set Antoinette's religion to rights if she could, or, failing this, to make her declare her creed. The next day but one, which was Sunday, gave her the opportunity with which a blue-poplin dress had unfortunately interfered on the Friday evening.

so, when she looked at John Dorrien, her whole aspect said, "Are you going to preach?" But aloud she merely remarked, "I thought you were going to Saint-Elizabeth."

"I have been there this morning," he answered, composedly, "and since you are not going out, Antoinette, will you allow me to have a little talk with you?"

His manner was very grave. Antoinette drew herself up slightly.

"Pray, John," she said, "do not. I wish to be friends with you—with Mrs. Reginald it is plain that I cannot. But I think you are both considerate and reasonable, which she is not; so, since we cannot agree on the subject, pray let us not talk of religion."

John gave her a look of grave surprise, then he smiled.

"Do you know Latin?" he asked.

"No—yes—very little," stammered Antoinette; "the verbs are such a nuisance. I left it off when Tom Clarke left La Ruya."

John laughed, but he had to change his ground.

"Do you know Greek?"

"Of course I don't," a little impatiently. "Why do you ask?"

"Greek is a noble language. The 'Iliad' is the noblest poetry in the world. But it would be rather absurd in me to tell you—in Greek—about the wrath of Achilles, son of Peleus, and how he and Atrides, King of Kings, quarreled and parted."

Antoinette was quick to understand, and a blush, which was not one of pleasure, suffused her face. She tried to laugh and look unconcerned.

"Thank you," she said. "Religion is Greek to me; I could not understand it. Thank you, John;" and she dropped him a little mocking courtesy.

"No," said John; "how could you understand a language of which you have not even been taught the alphabet? No sane person would venture to pronounce on a science which he or she had never studied, and every one decides as a matter of course in that most momentous of questions—the relations of man to God. And so you, Antoinette, who have so unfortunately been reared in unbelief—even you do not hesitate to use such words as superstition and nonsense in connection with the Christian's creed."

The reproof, though very gently uttered, was a severe one. Antoinette blushed, but this time it was with shame. She hung down her head abashed, and said quite humbly:

"I am very sorry, John—I did not mean to be rude; but Mrs. Reginald did provoke me."

"Yes," he said, smiling, "she did; and, to tell you the truth, I came out here to speak of that with you. Shall we walk or sit?"

"Oh, let us sit," she answered, with a resigned air.

So they sat down on an old stone bench that seemed to be waiting for them. The spot was sheltered and inclosed; no token of tall houses or dark roofs breaking on the pale blue of the October sky was visible. They sat in the shade of a tall horse-chestnut tree, but the genial warmth of the sun was around them. The song of birds was silent now, but there was a happy fluttering in the heavy boughs, a rush of wings or a twitter every now and then—and all these were very pleasant to hear. Before them, at the end of the path, they could see the ancient river-god, ever leaning on his urn, whence trickled a little streamlet. It played on its way with a sunbeam, which darted in and out of the clear thread of crystal till it rested quivering on the shallow bosom of the water in the basin below. From this rose up tall reeds, ferns of tender green, and large-leaved arums, half hiding the heathen deity. Mosses and lichens clung to his gray stone limbs; man had turned away from his worship, forsaken his altars, and set him there to adorn a garden; but Nature, kinder than man, still clothed him, as of yore, in her softest garments, and decked him with her fairest foliage.

"Well," said Antoinette, a little impatiently, "what is it, John?"

"Well, I only want to say this—Mrs. Reginald will be a good, kind friend to you, if you will only let her."

"Oh, please, I would rather not have Mrs. Reginald's friendship," exclaimed Antoinette, looking alarmed. "She does not like me, and that is bad enough; but, if she liked me, I should have no more chance with her than Joli, my sparrow, would have with Ninette, the cat. You see, John," she added, demurely, "you have known Mrs. Reginald many years, and you are accustomed to her, but, for those who are not, the good lady is simply dreadful."

"And yet you may want a friend," said John, looking at her almost wistfully. "My mother is far too much of an invalid to stand between you and any trouble, but Mrs. Reginald could, and would do so, if you would let her, Antoinette."

"Well, I shall not prevent her," composedly replied Antoinette.

"Do not," persisted John, ignoring the mock gravity with which she spoke. "Her opinion weighs more with Mr. Dorrien than that of any one else in this house."

"Oh, dear! and I refused to wear blue poplin, and I would not go with her to Saint-Elizabeth!" said Antoinette, laughing. "Do you think she will write all my sins to Mr. Dorrien, John?"

"She will certainly consider it her duty to tell them," answered John, quietly; "but there will be no need for her to write. Mr. Dorrien came back last night. He never joins us at breakfast," he added, in answer to Antoinette's look of surprise.

It was more than surprise which the young girl felt—it was a sort of mortification. How little, how very little, was her presence to Mr. Dorrien! Perhaps, having always been one of a small family, in a narrow home, she did not take into sufficient account the separation which exists between the members of large households. One thing she now felt keenly, however. She had been as sunshine in her mother's house, and even Mademoiselle Mélanie's sternness would relax in her presence; but Mr. Dorrien required her not to brighten that inevitable gloom which settles upon the lives of men who have outlived youth, its freshness, its hopes, and its joys. She felt pained, but she was offended too, as much so, at least, as her natural sweetness of temper would allow her to be, and she straightened her slender neck, and curled her lip, very slightly, perhaps, but perceptibly, to John Dorrien's attentive gaze. He felt inclined to utter a few words of warning, but he did not, and perhaps it was as well. Warning, as a rule, is spoken in vain. Beacons are scattered over all the shores of this world's troubled sea. They are seen miles away, they burn night and day with clearest light, and what shipwreck have they *yet* prevented? What nation, what sovereign, what man *or woman* but has rushed to meet the doom that might so

easily have been arrested? So, with the consciousness that he had perhaps said too much, John was silent. Moreover, there was no time for him to speak. A servant was coming toward them.

"I believe Mr. Dorrien wants you," said John, rising.

"Oh! then I suppose I am going to be tried, sentenced, and executed," said Antoinette, endeavoring to look unconcerned. "Well, it must be done."

Mr. Dorrien did want his granddaughter, and, trying to keep up that look of easy indifference, Antoinette followed the servant to her grandfather's presence.

Mr. Dorrien was in his room on the ground-floor. The curtains had not been drawn, and there was a sort of warm, subdued gloom in it, that was soothing to the eye. The heavy hangings, the rich and dark furniture, the deep colors of the Turkey carpet, were all in harmony, and Mr. Dorrien, pale and wearied, looking half asleep, lay on the long, low couch, as if he had no other purpose in life than to dream it away in a state of calm *ennui*, with his hand resting on a gray Angora cat, who purred on her cushion near him. He rose to receive his granddaughter, welcomed her, and helped her to a chair with his usual languid courtesy.

But perhaps because almost every thing bored him, Mr. Dorrien was not a man of many words, and rarely used circumlocution when he could avoid it. Having first ascertained that his granddaughter was quite well, but, as she felt, with a girl's quickness, without taking the least interest in her answer, he said, quietly:

"How is it you are at home this morning, Antoinette? Mrs. Reginald says you declined accompanying her to Saint—"

Mr. Dorrien paused, at a loss for the name of his parish church, which, indeed, he rarely frequented.

"Saint-Elizabeth," suggested Antoinette. "Yes, I preferred staying within."

She said it simply, without the least appearance of forwardness, but Mr. Dorrien looked fastidious.

"My dear child," he exclaimed, with just a touch of impatience, "allow me to give you a piece of information. No one can look more absurd than the young woman who assumes to be an *esprit fort*. It is also very unbecoming in a person of your sex."

Antoinette thought it better not to answer so singular a remark as this, but she certainly had never thought of religion as becoming before this moment.

"I can make allowances for your unfortunate rearing," continued Mr. Dorrien, "but I trust you will have the good sense to see your mistake. Mrs. Reginald is a *leetle* impetuous, and all that, but John is most temperate, and a rational talk with him will soon give you sounder ideas of religion than you seem to entertain."

"Perhaps—" began Antoinette.

"Excuse me," interrupted Mr. Dorrien, "I wish for no sort of argument on this subject, and I lay no sort of compulsion upon you—I only wish you to know my feeling on the matter."

Antoinette bent her head in acknowledgment, and Mr. Dorrien, having looked fastidious a little while longer, broached another topic.

"I have also a favor to ask of you. It is that you will not wear black. It is a mournful, depressing color, and most ungirlish. Mrs. Reginald will kindly see that you have whatever is fitting."

Antoinette colored to the roots of her dark hair. It was, indeed, almost too much. To be referred to John for theology, and to Mrs. Reginald for the toilet! What girlish temper but must rebel at this? She was silent, however. Mr. Dorrien looked at her. Was it her silence or something in her aspect, that brought a cloud to his countenance as he gazed on that pleasant, girlish face?

"How old are you?" he asked, almost abruptly.

"Eighteen."

"You look older; but then you are not at all like your father, who was fair."

"I am like my mother."

"Yes, I believe you are;" this was said as if Mr. Dorrien had seen his daughter-in-law so dimly, or so long ago, that he could feel no sort of certainty with regard to her appearance.

"Well, as I said," he resumed, "Mrs. Reginald will see to all your girlish wants while you remain with us. In other matters, if such should occur, you can apply to John Dorrien."

"And not to you, sir?" Antoinette could not help exclaiming.

"No, not to me," very decisively replied Mr. Dorrien; "you see, my dear child," he continued, "I am out of health. I have a great deal to think of, and it is out of the question that I should be troubled with every little trifle that may occur. John is your cousin, most willing to oblige you—in short, it is much the best plan."

For the first time Antoinette displayed some warmth.

"I shall endeavor not to trouble him," she said.

"Indeed! And pray may I ask why so?" inquired Mr. Dorrien, with a look of surprise in his blue eyes.

Antoinette would not, or could not, answer that question.

"Very awkward," resumed Mr. Dorrien, dryly. "You seem to have an unfortunate prejudice against Mr. John Dorrien, and yet he is precisely the person with whom it is most needful that you should be on good terms."

"Surely Mr. John Dorrien is not the master of the house!" said Antoinette.

"Of course not; I only spoke of your relations with him. Perhaps I had better say a few words on that subject. Yes," continued Mr. Dorrien, as if arguing the matter with himself, "I think I had. You see, my dear, I have brought you here in the hope that John and you may so far like each other as to become one. I have no fortune to give you. All my capital is invested in this business, and cannot be alienated from it; and after me this business *must* go down to John. He is very able, and he is a Dorrien—the last, I believe. In short, this is a settled thing, which cannot be altered, but which naturally affects your position—unless, as I say—"

"Never!" interrupted Antoinette, rising so vehemently that her chair nearly fell. "I like Mr. John Dorrien; I do not complain of the position you give him; but—"

"I beg you will say no more," interrupted Mr. Dorrien, looking amazed, but perhaps as much with the noise Antoinette's chair had made, as with her vehement protest; "you quite mistake and misunderstand, and I must ask you to consider my well-meant words unspoken. I have no intention of persuading you into this. I have and claim no sort of power over Mr. John Dorrien's feelings. If, at the end of a few months, you both find that acquaintance has not created mutual liking, you can either go to some other home, which I shall provide for you, or remain

here with John and his wife. It is necessary that Mr. John Dorrien should marry, and he has promised me to do so before the year is out."

"And I suppose I got the first chance," said Antoinette, trying to laugh, but with tears of mortification in her eyes.

"I think we need say no more on this subject," remarked Mr. Dorrien, very coldly. "I have already requested that you will consider my words unspoken."

Antoinette, who had resumed her seat, probably considered these last words as a dismissal, for she rose again. Mr. Dorrien did not detain her, but rose too. His look wandered over her whole person, resting with evident disfavor on her black dress. The fastidious meaning came back to his face as he remarked:

"You will kindly remember what I said about black, will you not, my dear?"

"Oh, certainly," replied Antoinette, looking resigned and a victim. "What color shall I wear?"

"Any thing not too dark. Good-morning, my dear."

He shook hands with her kindly enough, and thus they parted. As the door of Mr. Dorrien's sitting-room closed upon her, Antoinette found herself face to face with John. She drew back a little, looked at him with a defiant sort of coldness, then passed on. Mr. Dorrien's interference had certainly not helped much toward the good understanding of these young people; but then to be sure that Antoinette should like John Dorrien, and marry him ultimately, was not a matter which lay very near to Mr. Dorrien's heart.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ALTHOUGH she had been so signally defeated, Antoinette showed that her temper was a good one, by not bearing malice toward Mrs. Reginald. She did, indeed, look pensive for a day or two, and declined going out sight-seeing, on the plea of headache; but one bright morning she shook off all signs of despondency, and, putting in her fresh young face at the door of Mrs. Reginald's sitting-room, she said, demurely:

"May I come in, Mrs. Reginald?"

"Yes, my dear, certainly," was the prompt reply. "Headache better?"

"Gone," answered Antoinette, gayly. "Mrs. Reginald," she said, sitting down on the first chair she found, "Mr. Dorrien has referred me to you on all matters of dress. I should like—since I am not to wear black—I should like to wear gray."

"Gray!—a young thing like you, fresh and rosy, in gray! Nonsense! Turn Quakeress at once."

"The Quakers are very nice people, I am sure," replied Antoinette, demurely; "but the women wear hideous bonnets. I would rather not put my head into one of those things."

"Wear pink or blue, dear," insisted Mrs. Reginald.

"Pink and blue are for little children," said Antoinette, still demure.

"Well, then, take one of their new-fangled colors—mauve, magenta, solferino." (These were the new colors then, reader!)

"If you please, it must be gray," interrupted Antoinette, looking gently obstinate; "but I do not mind any bright trimming that may please you, Mrs. Reginald."

With this concession Mrs. Reginald had to be satisfied. The gray dress was forthwith discussed, ordered that same day, and made the next, and it proved to be elegant, becoming, and lady-like. Mr. Dorrien condescended to praise it; John, though he said nothing, thought that Antoinette looked very well in it; and Mrs. Reginald gloried in it openly, and took a decided fancy to Antoinette on the strength of it. It may be, too, that she liked the young girl all the better for having prevailed over her. At all events, she called her Ninette, and was in the highest good-humor with her—a fact of which she gave her proof by driving her about Paris.

Mrs. John Dorrien was again unwell, and John was very busy. Mrs. Reginald was not a willing guide, like Mrs. Dorrien, nor a deeply-informed one, like John, but she took a hearty pleasure in all she saw, which would have roused the most languid of sight-seers. Languid Antoinette certainly was not, yet the spirit with which Mrs. Reginald entered into the task before her was con-

tagious, and gave a new zest to the young girl's keen enjoyment.

History is the dramatic life of humanity, and ancient cities are history under one of its most vivid aspects. We cannot gaze on their monuments, tread their streets, watch their rivers, but voices speak to us on every side, telling us marvelous old stories out of the past. The dead do not really die in these capitals of nations. The Gaul makes way for the Roman, the Roman for the Frank, the heathen temple becomes the Christian cathedral, and the Seine girds them in the self-same embrace, and the same clear sky smiles down upon them, while generation flows over generation, like the waves of the river going down to the sea. That dimness of the past which makes history so vague and unsatisfactory fades away when we stand on the spots where her great dramas have been played out. Mediæval kings and queens were with Antoinette when she saw those dark towers of the ancient palace which frown above the river. The gay and accomplished Valois, and those women of world-known beauty who gathered around them, looked down at her from the windows of the Louvre opposite. The palace has undergone some changes, true; but Mary Stuart once lived here, in all the freshness of her unrivaled loveliness; and here, too, another Mary, less beautiful, no doubt, but not less ill-fated, left that royal dwelling for a prison, and the prison for a scaffold. Who could look coldly on the stones to which such memories cling? Not an impressible, imaginative girl like Antoinette Dorrien.

Moreover, she had for all kinds of sight-seeing the healthy appetite of eighteen—she never seemed to get too much of it. She had a young, elastic frame, and felt fatigue when she got home, and not a second before. Tragic associations interested and saddened her a little, but could not depress her. She had the gift of the young. She thought that the past was really past indeed, and that it had acted its cruel wrongs and great sorrows once for all; that the future would never act the self-same tragedies over again with new actors, and before a new audience. The great illustrious dead slept in their graves at last—they had paid a heavy price for their greatness, but now they were at peace, and it was well. In the mean while

they made a fine stormy background for the present, and that, too, was well. So Antoinette enjoyed herself to her heart's content, and was charmed with every thing. Indeed, she lost her heart again and over again. After spending a delightful morning in the Tuileries gardens with Mrs. Reginald, she fell in love with them. The cool gloom of the horse-chestnut trees, the stately avenues, the white sunlit statues and vases, the sparkling fountains, and the little formal garden-plots, with their old-fashioned flowers, enchanted her. She proclaimed Lenôtre a genius, and the Tuileries gardens the finest in the world. The next spot to which she succumbed was the seductive Palais Royal. To walk under those galleries, to look at those fascinating shops, and to feel the airy life of the garden around you all the time, seemed the perfection of bliss.

"Oh! I must come here every day," she said, enthusiastically; "I must indeed, Mrs. Reginald. And, oh! do look at those ear-rings—a rose-bud with a pearl; or at these—a pair of enamel shoes, with heels and buckles to them. Can you imagine any thing beyond it?"

"Nothing more absurd, certainly," was hard-hearted Mrs. Reginald's curt reply. "You do not suppose Mr. Dorrien would allow you to wear a pair of shoes in your ears, do you?"

Antoinette suppressed a sigh. She certainly felt a longing for the ear-rings; and they were so ridiculously cheap. And so all the pleasant places of Paris passed before her girlish eyes, and after these she saw its curiosities, museums, and galleries, and wondered more and more. The Louvre bewildered her, as well it might. It rather oppressed her, too. Ages seemed to brood in those stately halls, which were as the graves of dead nations and extinct races; the graves, too, of forms of thought from which man drifts farther and farther every day. When shall we have again in marble such stately women and Godlike men as those whom the Greek statuaries have left us? When shall our painters see the heavens open, and all its saints overflowing with holiness and love, rapt in adoration, such as the old Italian painters surely saw them once on a time? We have gained much, but, woe betide us! have we not lost more than all our gains? What are we since

we have a poorer standard of the outward man than the heathen Greek, and of the inward man than the mediæval Christian?

Something of this was revealed to the mind of the untaught girl, who, for the first time, was brought face to face with antique and Christian art.

"Mrs. Reginald," said she, after looking intently at the Polymnia, "would you not like to see such a woman as this, so calm, so still, so grave, and yet so sweet?"

"My dear, she is a muse," was the prudent reply, "and muses, you know, live up on Parnassus. So where is the use of wanting them down here?"

"Well, I should like to see such a woman as that," half-sighed Antoinette.

"John has a very good copy of this lady," said Mrs. Reginald—"you may look at her in the library. Poor John! I suspect he once flirted with the muses."

"You think that John wrote poetry?" exclaimed Antoinette, in amazement. "Why, Mrs. Reginald, he is so matter-of-fact."

"Is he??"

"Oh! dreadfully, Mrs. Reginald. I find it quite oppressive, though he is so good."

"Really!"

"But I assure you I mean it, every word. He is so positive, and exact, and—"

"You silly thing," interrupted Mrs. Reginald, kindly, though peremptorily, "do you think John will tell you, or any one, all his dreams, feelings, and fancies? He is a man of business now, and an ambitious one; but he was an ambitious scholar once, and I am sure he then intended being something very different from the John Dorrien whom you know. Perhaps he meant to be a great speaker, perhaps he intended being a great poet, because his mistake is, and always has been, to fancy that he can compass his ends and never be baffled in what he undertakes. It is that, to be sure, which has raised him to his present position, and also made La Maison Dorrien what it is. But it has its drawbacks—it has its drawbacks, and so John will find some day, if he does not mind."

"How so?" asked Antoinette, curiously.

"*My* dear, John is too trusting and too proud, and a

proud man who trusts must suffer for it in the end. And now let us have a look at the Italians."

A different impression, and yet one not less deep than that which she had derived from Greek statuary, awaited Antoinette when they went among the Italian painters upstairs. She was prepared for the beauty, but not for the holiness; for the marvelous color, but not for the fervor and intensity of religious feeling which she saw here displayed; but this time she made no comments. She did not ask her companion if she would not like to see such women as these saints with the golden aureole around their fair young heads, and the roses of paradise in their virgin hands. She did not wonder at those ardent martyrs who smiled at pain, who looked up at the heavenly Jerusalem during all their torments, and who saw, through the pale and soft splendor of the wonderful city, the happy angels bending down with wreaths and boughs of triumphant palm.

She was silent, and it was a pity, for Mrs. Reginald had an answer quite ready for her, an answer which would, of course, have settled Antoinette's infidel tendencies in no time. Indeed, the young girl was chary of communicating her impressions that day, and when Mrs. Dorrien smilingly said to her at dinner, "Well, my dear, what did you see to-day worthy of note?" Antoinette looked up at the ceiling, as if in doubt, and replied, after a pause:

"Oh! we saw so many things, and there were two or three that amused me much, Mrs. John. In the Egyptian Museum we saw skeins of thread, real Egyptian thread, you know. Also balls of thread that seemed to have been just wound off, and fragments of cloth, in one of which was a darn, not over-neatly made—which was a comfort to me."

"All this is deeply interesting," said Mr. Dorrien, "and it shows what benefit you derived from your sight-seeing."

Antoinette gazed at her grandfather in some wonder; then she blushed, and looked at her plate, and said not another word till he had left them for the evening.

Mrs. Dorrien had retired to her own room; Mrs. Reginald, who was tired, was sleeping in her rocking-chair; and, when John came up at nine o'clock, he found his cousin with a book in her lap, which she was not readnig, and her eyes sadly fixed on the bright wood-fire. He went and sat by her.

"What ails you?" he asked, in a friendly, direct way.

Antoinette gave a little start, but, with the same openness, she answered:

"I am sorry Mr. Dorrien dislikes me!"

"Dislikes you, Antoinette?"

"Oh! yes, he does," she persisted, calmly. "Do not imagine it was what I said at dinner that displeased him. He had been gazing at me for some time with a look of thorough dislike. I thought it was my fancy, but when I spoke I learned that it was not."

John looked sorry, but he was too honest to assure Antoinette that she was utterly mistaken; he knew she was not. Mr. Dorrien might not actually dislike his granddaughter, but he certainly did not like her. For some reason or other, she found no favor in his eyes. Perhaps he could not forgive her being so utterly unlike a Dorrien as she was. Such was Antoinette's own impression.

"I am too like my mother to please Mr. Dorrien," she said, looking up at John. She tried to laugh, but the tears that sparkled in her dark eyes, and the quivering of her red lip, belied the effort. "I must get used to it," she said, rallying, or trying to look as if she did; "it is to be my lot in this house."

"Surely not," said John, with his bright smile.

"Oh! I am not blind," said Antoinette, still wanting to look brave. "Mrs. Reginald is very kind, but she only endures me. Mr. Dorrien sneers at me when I open my lips; and Carlo—why, Carlo likes you best now! And *you* are laughing at it all!" she added, darting a look of quick resentment at him.

In her displeasure she attempted to rise, but, taking her hand, he gently compelled her to resume her seat.

"I cannot let you go and include me among your enemies," he said.

Antoinette gave him a doubtful look. She could not forget what Mr. Dorrien had said to her, but she read no confirmation of his words in the young man's eyes. They were handsome eyes, as she saw, and full of friendly kindness, but there was nothing lover-like in the look those dark-gray eyes bent upon her.

"I did not mean that I had enemies," she said, a little *reluctantly*, "of course not—but—"

"You meant that no one liked you in this house," he said, filling up the gap her pause had made. "Do you really think so?"

Antoinette hung her head and looked a little ashamed.

"You are good to me," she answered, at length. "I beg your pardon; I was wrong not to remember it. You were kind that first evening, and you are kind still, but—"

"But," he interrupted, with a smile, "you do not think John's kindness worth much. And yet, Antoinette, I am the friend you must turn to in this house. Mr. Dorrien has told you as much, I know. He is wearied and out of health. Slight cares are too much for him, and so I am virtually master here. Do not think I boast; the burden is often a heavy one; there are days and weeks when I work harder than any slave; but, since it must be done, I do it ungrudgingly, and now and then I have my reward. Now, I will be honest with you," he added, with a bright smile lighting up his whole face like sudden sunshine; "it will be very pleasant for me to please you—if you will allow me, Antoinette.'

She laughed, a little, derisive laugh.

"Thank you," she said, "but I shall be generous, and not put you to the proof."

John looked more puzzled than displeased.

"Do you really think I could not be as good as my word?" he asked.

"Indeed I do," she roundly answered, but once more quite good-humored. "I am dying to have a piano and learn music. I need not tell you that, after the congratulations I received the other day from Mr. Dorrien on my fortunate ignorance of music, I am not going to ask him for an instrument and LESSONS," she added, raising her fine, dark eyebrows.

"And is that all?" said John, looking amused. "Do you really think a piano and a few lessons beyond my reach? Well, you certainly have no great opinion of my power in this house."

"But it is the noise, the practising the scales and exercises, and so forth," she said, impatiently; "it is all that which Mr. Dorrien could not endure."

But John did not seem to consider this an insuperable objection.

"I dare say you could modify his views on that subject,"

he said, quietly; "besides he is so rarely at home, that your study of music need not interfere with him in the least. I shall order in a piano to-morrow, and ask about a professor."

He was taking out his pocket-book to make a note of it, when, with a raised color and lowered eyes, Antoinette said, quickly: "No, thank you; I was only jesting. I—I really do not care about it, after all."

John looked at her in grave surprise, and his look said so plainly, "You are not telling the truth, and I do not believe you," that Antoinette turned her flushed face away as if she had been smitten; then suddenly she looked back at him, and said, with flashing eyes, breathing displeasure and defiance: "I wish I had never come here! I like you, John, but I hate having to depend upon you—it is not fair—it is not right. I am Mr. Dorrien's grand-daughter, after all."

"How can I expect you to understand?" asked John, half smiling, half sorrowful; "but, Antoinette, remember this—while you idled your youth in orange-gardens, and dreamed pleasant dreams, my youth was spent in this house in toil, and such cares as youth should never know. Such empire as I possess here I have bought at heavy cost. I have given the days and years which never return to man's life, and what have I got in exchange, Antoinette? Power—grudge it me not, and do not wonder that I hold it fast—do not grudge me either that I can do something to please you."

"Oh, no," said Antoinette, "I grudge you nothing, John; but I wish I had never come here."

"You do not like me enough to endure wanting me, Antoinette. Well, I have no claim to your liking—you are free to withhold it; I can only do my best to please you. Remember that, if my being master here displeases you, the fault is none of mine."

There was a patience in his look and voice that subdued her waywardness.

"Don't think me mean," she said, coloring up—"don't, John."

"No, why should I?"

"And don't think that I will be too proud to let you *please me.* That is not it."

"Then what is it?"

"I find it hard that I should want any one's kindness —even yours, John—in my grandfather's house."

"Well, I dare say it seems hard to you," he said, after a pause; "but you will let me get you a piano, after all?"

"No," said Antoinette, looking steadily before her, while the tell-tale blood spread over her neck and face. "Thank you very much, but I had rather not."

She kept her eyes averted; then suddenly she turned round. John was looking at her with a gaze so perplexed, and yet so searching, that she gave a little start. Neither spoke. Their silence woke Mrs. Reginald, who jumped straight up in her chair.

"Of course," she said, peremptorily—"Versailles to-morrow. Try to come with us, John. Bless you, I heard all you were saying!" she added, with that positiveness of people who have been asleep, and who will never confess it.

CHAPTER XXV.

The sun shone on the cold stateliness of Versailles. What wide and silent streets this once royal town had!—what long avenues of tall trees passed through it!—what a look of something dead and utterly by-gone there was about the large stone-houses! Ruin or decay had not touched them, and yet they were desolate of aspect, even though flowers bloomed on their iron balconies, and laughing children peeped out of the windows. When we go down with the smooth tide of Time, we care little for the changes which he brings; but when, casting us on one shore, he flows between us and the other, we are conscious of a great gulf, which nothing can bridge over. Versailles may swarm with thousands, legions of armed men may tread her streets, foreign invaders may sleep in her deserted palaces—all these pass away as shadows from a mirror; they cannot fill up that strange, wide gap between what has been and what is, between the splendor of generations of kings and the barren coldness of the present time.

And so, though the king be gone, Versailles is all royal. Indeed, it is that, or it is nothing—nothing, at least, that the stranger will care to see, or to remember. Monarchy never had so splendid a mausoleum as that large, silent palace. The actual unfitness of its rooms and galleries as places to be lived in set it apart from every other royal dwelling. The long, stately gardens, with their terraces, their flights of steps, their idle fountains, and lichen-eaten statues, have a sad and heavy majesty from which the homely royalty of our own time would shrink with unconquerable *ennui*. The children who play on the grass, the old soldiers who sit in the sun, the idlers who wander in the cool, green alleys, are the only kings and queens who now can visit the gardens of Versailles. For they have nothing buried in that huge white grave which stands up there, shining so coldly in the sun—neither absolute power, nor prestige, nor the obeisance of courtiers, nor the love of nations. Sun-heat is genial to them, and cool shade refreshing; they can enjoy the spray of the slender fountain springing up to meet the sunshine, and laugh at the old marble gods and goddesses; at Latona with her frogs, at Saturn with his bellows.

One of these queens Antoinette was when she went about Versailles with Mrs. Reginald, looking at all its marvels with the eagerness of a child turning over the pages and gazing at the images of the most splendid picture-book that was ever put before childish eyes. John had been unable to come, but he had provided Miss Dorrien with a voluminous guide-book. She consulted its pages diligently, and imparted their contents to Mrs. Reginald with much zeal for that lady's information, also her own impressions of all she saw.

"O Mrs. Reginald, did you ever see such a palace as this?" she exclaimed, from the moment that they entered the court, in the centre of which rises the equestrian statue of the great French king.

"No, but others have," the elder lady composedly answered. "I have a dreamy recollection that the Escurial covers—well, I will not say how many square miles, for fear of mistakes."

"Mrs. Reginald, you see that clock?"

"No, my dear; my sight is bad."

"Oh, what a pity! The book says its hand was stopped three times—at the death of Louis XIV., at that of Louis XV., then at that of Louis XVIII. How did they do it, Mrs. Reginald? Did they let it be quiet from one king's death to that of another? or—"

"My dear," interrupted Mrs. Reginald, laying her hand on the young girl's arm, "never mind the clock; it goes fast enough now, king or no king. But look at that balcony. It was there your namesake, Marie Antoinette, came out to face the yelling mob below, and, so far as she knew, death. A brave woman—not a wise woman—but a brave woman, if ever there was one."

The tragic images thus called up sobered Antoinette for a while; but when they entered the palace and ascended the majestic staircase, and entered the Galerie des Batailles her ardor woke anew.

"Mrs. Reginald, look at those gray columns and the pictures—do look!"

"No," answered Mrs. Reginald, with the calmest perversity; "you may look, and tell me what you see; I like to hear you."

Thus encouraged, Antoinette rattled away. Every picture of a battle was gazed at, every room was visited and commented upon.

"Mrs. Reginald, did you know that this shabby little room was one of Madame de Maintenon's? We saw her portrait a while ago—that lady with the beautiful dark eyes."

"All these ladies had fine eyes," was Mrs. Reginald's irrelevant reply. "I suppose there is no beauty without fine eyes. John's are the finest I ever saw."

Antoinette took no notice of this remark, but, consulting her book, exclaimed eagerly:

"I declare we have missed Marie Antoinette's room. Her portrait is in it. Perhaps it was from that very room that she had to go out on the balcony. And it is quite an historic room, for two queens died there, and two kings were born in it. Do let us see it."

"Yes, my dear," good-humoredly assented Mrs. Reginald; "but if you will see every room in which queens have lived and died, and kings have been born, or emperors slept or dined—why, you will find it hard work."

But Antoinette did not fear fatigue; with light, unwearied feet she flitted about the palace, Mrs. Reginald following her indeed, but sitting down, and often shutting her eyes whenever she could do so. And thus she saw, as she wished to see them, rooms made memorable by history, though they have kept so few tokens of the past they once inclosed. Here three *gardes-du-corps* had given their blood for Marie Antoinette, and thus saved her for the scaffold. Here the Czar Peter had slept, and there the man to whom Versailles owed its splendor and greatness, the haughty monarch whom all France had worshiped, and before whom Europe had once trembled—here Louis XIV. had ended his long life. The bed, of faded velvet, in which he died with a simple fortitude which even his enemies could not deny, is still adorned with the elaborate needle-work of the young and noble damsels whom Madame de Maintenon reared in Saint-Cyr. His shadowy presence still haunts that room, a small one for so great a sovereign. Antoinette tried to fancy that his majesty had just risen, put on one of his big wigs, and was stepping out on high-heeled shoes, and in all the splendor of gold-embroidered velvet and finest Mechlin lace, to the *salle du conseil.* She tried to call up the crowd of courtiers in the *œil de bœuf*, all wigged, all clad in velvet and lace no whit inferior to the king's, all waiting for the sun of their worship to appear; but no—her imagination could not go so far. The past was past indeed—past and buried, in a grave so deep that no angel's trumpet would call it forth to resurrection and to second life.

Twice Antoinette walked round that room, as if she were never to see it again. It impressed her more than any thing else—more than that gorgeous *galerie de glaces*, with its mirrors, its statues, pilasters, trophies, and paintings of victory, which is the sad and significant epitome of that reign of splendid follies and fatal conquests.

"And now, have you seen Versailles?" asked Mrs. Reginald, when they went out into the garden.

"Yes, but not the Trianons," coaxingly said Antoinette. "Just one look at them, Mrs. Reginald."

To Trianon they went, and there they found John Dorrien waiting for them. Both Mrs. Reginald and Antoinette brightened at his aspect.

"Now that is kind!" cried the elder lady; while the younger one exclaimed heartily:

"O John, why did you not come sooner? It has been glorious!"

John smiled kindly at her happy face and bright eyes, and Mrs. Reginald laughed.

"As if the boy did not know Versailles by heart!" she said. "But I am glad you came, John," she added, making her way to a sunny bench, and sitting down, "for now you will take this insatiable young lady off my hands, and I can wait for you here."

No one ever argued with Mrs. Reginald, but Antoinette, in her inexperience, made the attempt. Mrs. Reginald shook her head, and kindly, but most positively, checked her first words.

"No use, dear—my mind is made up.—What news, John?"

"Mr. Dorrien does not come home this evening. I have taken it upon myself to put off dinner till eight." Mrs. Reginald nodded approvingly. "Oliver Black has come back, and will dine with us."

Approbation vanished from Mrs. Reginald's face.

"I am heartily sorry for it," she said, emphatically, and catching Antoinette's surprised look, she added: "A handsome young man, my dear, charming, and John's dearest friend, but whom I cannot endure."

"Charming, and John's dearest friend, and you cannot endure him!" echoed Antoinette, with a little curl of her lip. "Why, Mrs. Reginald is that possible?"

"Quite," sarcastically replied Mrs. Reginald. "He deals in untruths—tells them by the dozen."

"You are giving Oliver Black a nice character," interrupted John, looking displeased.

"His own, my dear boy," kindly retorted Mrs. Reginald. "You have heard of the old Venetian glasses, that shiver at the touch of poison?—well, then, my regard is as brittle a cup as a Venetian glass. Put a lie into it, and it cracks asunder. I despise lies, big or little," she added, bending her one eye on Antoinette with so severe a meaning that the young girl colored deeply. "There, that will do," resumed Mrs. Reginald, in a calmer tone; "I make you lose time, and Oliver Black is not worth it."

She nodded at them, and they turned away, walking down one of the alleys, and leaving the Grand Trianon behind them. John Dorrien paused in the path, and asked Antoinette if she did not wish to see the palace.

"No, thank you, I have had enough of palaces to-day," replied Antoinette, with some asperity. She took out her handkerchief, and fanned herself, saying it was dreadfully hot. Her looks, her manner, her voice, even—all were altered. Their frank gayety and hearty enjoyment had vanished; keen annoyance and moody discontent were written on her face.

That girlish face, so young, so fresh, and now so clouded, John's eyes scrutinized with quiet but very keen attention. Those eyes of his, which his friend thought the finest ever seen, were also very penetrating eyes, that saw both far and deep. It was not in John's power to read his young companion's face, and not draw swift and unpleasant conclusions from her altered looks. But his thoughts were silent, not expressed. He made no allusion to Oliver Black, or to Mrs. Reginald's prejudice against him. He did not seem to perceive the change which the few words that had been spoken by his old friend had produced in Antoinette. He did his best to lead her mind away from thoughts which were evidently not pleasing. He spoke to her of her namesake, and she soon forgot her annoyance, whatever its cause might be.

Antoinette knew—who does not?—the tragic history of the royal lady; but there was a vagueness in her knowledge which lent that sad tale a deeper pathos, if deeper can be, than that of reality. Was this the little palace which the young queen had so loved?—were these the shady paths along which her happy feet had wandered? Every now and then she paused and looked at John.

"Is it possible?—can it be true?" she asked, with her dark eyes fixed on him in earnest inquiry.

"Can what be true?" said he.

"That this is the very place in which Marie Antoinette lived?"

"Why not? Besides, you have seen nothing yet."

He took her along those green solitudes and lonely ways which give the lesser of the two Trianons its peculiar *charm*. Once they rested on a grassy bank, and Antoi-

nette, clasping her hands around her knees, looked down in depths of dark, green gloom, full of mossy rocks and glossy ivy, twining round ancient trunks, and northern verdure of tall trees climbing on a pale sky. How unlike the orange-gardens and straight cypresses and cloudless azure, flushed with golden sunset, of her southern home! A little brown bird flew down from a bough, and lit on the path before her. He hopped daintily in its shade and sunshine, pecking on his way, and Antoinette watched him wistfully.

"I suppose his grandfather was here in the queen's time," she said, looking up at John, who smiled.

"If not his grandfather, at least some ancestor of his," he answered. "Some careless little brown bird, who flew in these alleys when the queen pined in her prison, and who sang on his bough when she laid her head on the block."

"Do not!" entreated Antoinette, with a shudder—"I would rather not think of it."

"Then why come here?" he asked. "The whole earth is haunted, if we look at it rightly; but, of all its haunted spots, which is more pitifully so than this? Here a queen, young, beautiful, and beloved, played at idyls, and pastorals, and village-life, as poor children play at kings and queens. There beyond is the little white temple of love, with the statue of *Amour vainqueur*, rising in its solitary altar. Who so much as this Austrian princess might think that young heathen god faithful, and whom did he ever desert so entirely? He gave her the welcome of a nation, and she died amid its curses. He brought every heart to her feet, only to alienate from her the heart of her own child. He promised and gave her the love of a king, and he surrendered her to the foul touch of an executioner. Surely no woman was ever so cruelly betrayed by love."

"But some were true to her," said Antoinette.

"Some were true," he repeated. "What is the truth of some—ay, of many, if we compare it with the cruel treachery of one? Remember, that all should be true, and that, when one betrays, the wrong seems frightful to a loyal heart."

"Let us go," impatiently said Antoinette, rising as she spoke. "I want to see Trianon, and not to hear philosophy."

"Are you sure you dislike philosophy?" he asked, with perfect good-humor, but rising at her behest. "I fancied the other day—but perhaps I was mistaken—that you had a decided turn for philosophic speculations."

Antoinette stood still in the middle of the path, and tapped her feet on the gravel with evident vexation, while with a heightened color she said:

"Now, John, let us understand each other once for all—I shall never interfere with you, but please not to interfere with me. I will not be catechised by any one—no, not by Mr. Dorrien himself."

"Mr. Dorrien will never catechise you, Antoinette—he will pass sentence on you, should he think fit to do so; but he will give you no previous warning, certainly no trial."

Antoinette's dark eyes flashed fire.

"That is a threat," she said; "thank you, John."

"It is no threat," he answered. "Must I always remind you that you can rely on me—that, come what will, I will be true to you?"

"Why, in what peril do you think me?" she asked, throwing her head back with a sort of scorn.

"In none, if you like it. But, Antoinette, I have a faculty of which you may not be aware—I do not mistrust easily, but neither am I easily deceived. A word, a look, tell me much—the rest I guess. I tax you with nothing; but this I tell you—you have chosen an unsafe path—such a path as may end in your undoing."

Antoinette gave him a scared look.

"What do you mean?" she faltered.

"Nothing now. It has not yet come to plain-speaking between us; later you will feel that it would have been wiser in you to have trusted me."

Antoinette looked as if she could reply; her lips parted to speak, then she checked herself, and, laughing carelessly, said:

"I have heard that the old oracles spoke in riddles, John, and, on my word, you surpass them."

The taunt and the mocking look that accompanied it seemed to be unheeded by John Dorrien. Sensitive though he was by nature, he had learned perfect self-command in *the stern school* of business, and such girlish stabs as An-

toinette could deal him were very little indeed to the young man.

"Here is Marie Antoinette's little pastoral," he said; "that central house was for her husband, Louis XVI.—*la maison du seigneur*. This building was her dairy. Her brother-in-law was the miller of yonder little mill. What do you think of it all, Antoinette?"

She did not answer. She stood, like one entranced, close to the brink of a little lake to which, as they spoke, John had brought her.

The spot was very silent; no other visitors were there to break its quiet charm. The pale October sky, the still lake, the quaint little brown houses scattered here and there—all seemed to sleep in the same tranquil, golden light. The yellow poplar-boughs of the tree the queen had planted rose in the blue air; the boat in its moorings seemed to be waiting to convey the royal dairy-maid across the water; the swans floating on its calm waves looked as if they thought she would soon come out to feed them. So at first it seemed to Antoinette, but a second look told her another story. The breath of life was gone forever from the queen's Arcadia; decay was in the aspect of those forsaken dwellings; mildew had invaded their crumbling walls and untrodden steps, and the wildness of tall grasses and weeds, and trailing brambles, shrouded them on every side, and looked as if it would soon inclose them forever. Never more, felt Antoinette, would kings and queens play here at village-life. More than two generations of tragic history had gone by since those royal personages had laid down their state in this sylvan place, and a chilliness as that of their own graves now hung over it. In vain the sun shone; in vain happy birds built their nests in the trees, and there sang love-songs every spring; in vain bountiful Nature tenderly clothed these frail ruins in her fairest verdure; every day they faded farther and farther back into the dimness of the past; every day the shadow of forgetfulness was stealing something from them.

It is hard to feel the utter nothingness of all mortal things when we are in the heyday of our youth; it is hard to see how weak a grasp of life and its joys we have at the best of times. Antoinette felt rebellious, and turned away with a quivering lip.

"Let us go," she said; "it is dreary here."

They found Mrs. Reginald, not where they had left her, but sitting on the steps of the Petit Trianon, nigh some blue vases, in which still bloomed pale geraniums.

"Do you know what I have been doing?" she asked, as they drew near. "No, of course you do not. Well, I have been sitting here in the October sun, and listening to two shabby children who were playing near me. The little girl wore a dilapidated straw-hat, and the boy boasted a torn jacket. I suppose they crept in like rats, while the keeper was looking another way. Well, the little gipsies were merry enough, after a dreary fashion of their own; for what do you think they were singing?—'Trianon, Trianon.' They sang it to some Gregorian chant or other, and, on my word, I felt quite eerie. It sounded like the dirge of the place. At last some one came, and they flew off like a couple of sparrows."

"This is a sad and dreary place," said Antoinette, looking at the closed windows of the little palace—"very dismal."

"Dismal?" echoed Mrs. Reginald, setting her head on one side, and peering into the young girl's face. "Why, child, what change has come over the spirit of your dream? It was all so glorious a while back."

"That was Versailles, not Trianon," replied Antoinette, blushing a little; "besides," she frankly added, "I am tired now."

And fatigue it doubtless was which made her so silent all the way home that, unless in monosyllables, and to answer some question or direct remark, she never opened her lips.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Miss Dorrien—Mr. Oliver Black." It was Mrs. John Dorrien who performed the introduction, half an hour before dinner. John had found some letters to read on his return, Mrs. Reginald had gone up to her own room to rest for a *few minutes*, and John's mother was doing her best to en-

tertain John's friend, when the door of the little sitting-room which preceded the dining-room opened, and Antoinette entered. She had exchanged her gray walking-dress for one of pale-green silk; she had fastened in her hair a flower from the bouquet which John had given her, and which she carried in her hand. A narrow black velvet clasped her slender white neck; a little gold bracelet, inherited from her mother, glittered on her round wrist; and when she stood before Oliver Black, a little shy and awkward, perhaps, with dark eyes swiftly raised to his, and as quickly withdrawn, she looked a very pleasant and attractive picture of girlhood.

"My dear, you do not look at all tired!" exclaimed Mrs. Dorrien, giving Antoinette's blooming face a complacent look.

"I am rested now," was the low answer, and Antoinette went and sat down in the farthest chair she could find, with face studiously averted from the gaze of the handsome young man before her. Her eyes were bent on the carpet. She could not see the look of pleased surprise with which his rested on her slight figure, clad in rich pale raiment, on the graceful turn of her neck and small, well-shaped head, on her fresh young face, fair and blooming even in the half darkness of the spot where she sat.

"My dear, how far you sit!" said Mrs. Dorrien, looking round at her—"does your head ache?"

Oh! no, Annette's head did not ache, but she liked to sit away from the light. Was she pleased with Versailles? Oh, yes, very much indeed. John had joined them? Yes, John had met them at Trianon.

The words were almost inaudible, being spoken in John's bouquet.

"And he gave you some flowers, I see," said Mrs. Dorrien, still looking round at the young girl, as if determined to make her talk.

Antoinette's face was raised from the flowers in a moment. It was all in a flame, and she bit her lip as she answered, with an effort: "Yes, John gave me these," and she laid them carelessly upon the marble mantel-shelf.

Oliver Black probably saw that she was ill at ease, and did not wish to be noticed, for he at once kindly came to the rescue.

"What an uncomfortable house to live in that Versailles must have been!" he said, lounging back in a very easy arm-chair, and looking both handsome and indolent; "and Trianon—do you remember the awful sofas in Trianon, Mrs. Dorrien? Pseudo-Greek, I believe, and deplorably straight and stiff."

"Are there any sofas in Trianon?" asked Mrs. Dorrien, looking surprised.

"Perhaps there are not," he airily replied, not a whit disconcerted, "but they would be stiff and hard if there were any, you know, so that comes to the same thing—does it not, Miss Dorrien?"

Before the lady could answer, the door opened, and John's tall, straight figure and bright face appeared in the aperture.

"Only for a few minutes, Black," he said, apologetically, looking at his friend.

"To be sure," cried Oliver Black, starting up with perfect willingness.

"Will you be long, dear?" asked his mother, looking at him somewhat reproachfully.

"No, little mother, we shall come back directly," answered John, smiling.

The door closed upon them.

"My dear," said Mrs. Dorrien to Antoinette, who had not stirred from her shady place, "are you afraid of Mr. Black?"

"Oh! no," hesitatingly answered Antoinette, "not at all. I suppose," she added, "he is the gentleman whom Mrs. Reginald does not like?"

"Yes; dear Mrs. Reginald and Mr. Black do not get on. It is a pity; I think him a very pleasant young man; but you really have no need to be nervous about him. Mr. Dorrien is kind to him, for John's sake. I am sure the poor young fellow may bless the day when he first saw—My dear," she added, breaking off, and looking on the carpet, "do you see my smelling-bottle anywhere?"

Antoinette rose, and began looking for the smelling-bottle on the floor, but it was not to be found.

"I hope I left it up-stairs—I hope I did not lose it as I came back from Saint-Elizabeth's!" exclaimed Mrs. Dorrien, *uneasily*. "It was John's father gave it to me, and I

value it so much. I must look for it in my room." She rose as she spoke.

"Shall I go and help you look for it, Mrs. John?" asked Antoinette, who had all the happy willingness of the young to run upon errands.

"No dear, thank you. John will be coming back directly. Stay here."

She gently pressed Antoinette back into her chair, and placing John's bouquet on her lap, with a significant smile, she left the room. As she was closing the door, Antoinette heard her saying, to some one outside:

"Has John already done with you?"

"Yes; see what a worthless fellow I am, after all, Mrs. Dorrien. He is coming directly."

It was the voice of Oliver Black who thus answered her.

"I miss my smelling-bottle," said Mrs. Dorrien, half hesitatingly; then, lowering her voice to a whisper—but Antoinette's hearing was keen, and not a word escaped her—"You must not be affronted at Miss Dorrien's manner, Mr. Black. It is not pride, but shyness, that makes her so. You are too much a man of the world not to understand that."

Mr. Black made some inaudible reply, then entered the room, and closed the door. Antoinette looked at the flowers on her lap, and crimsoned steadily. Oliver Black walked straight toward her with sparkling eyes and outstretched hands.

"O my darling, how well you did it!" he said with a low laugh.

She raised her head as if she had been stung.

"Do not come near me," she said, her very lips turning white. "If you do I shall leave the room."

"My dear creature!" he exclaimed, amazed, but speaking very low, "what have I done?"

"Oh! nothing, nothing," she answered, seeming ready to cry, and sitting down again, for she had half risen; "but—but I shall never be able to go through this."

"Yes, yes, you will," he soothingly replied, approaching her as he spoke.

"I tell you I shall leave the room," she said, in a low, excited tone, and again rising. "Don't you see I would rather die than be found out? Don't you see I am dying with fear?"

Oliver Black's handsome face expressed mingled vexation and amusement.

"Well, you do keep me at arm's length," he said, so far obeying her behest as to remain standing before her; "and now let us make the best of the few minutes before us. How are you, dearest? But I need not ask—you look charmingly. How are you getting on with them all? John gives you flowers. I hope he is not already making love to you."

Antoinette tossed her bouquet on the table, and said, petulantly;

"Mr. John Dorrien is too sure of his ground to take that trouble."

Oliver laughed a low, gay, amused laugh.

"Poor John!" he said, softly. "How do you like him? Not much, I hope."

"Not at all—I detest preaching!"

"How dare he preach to you?" exclaimed Oliver. "He always was a conceited prig, though; but how comes he to preach to you?"

"Am I not a heathen?" said Antoinette.

"My darling, why did you let *that* out?" he asked, a little impatiently. He stood facing her, leaning with his back to the mantel-piece, and his arms folded across his breast. His eyes looked down into her face, as she sat opposite him, with her hands clasped on her lap, and her look raised to his.

"Why should I have hidden it?" she asked, with evident surprise. "Since he must dislike me, better give him good cause for his dislike."

"A man's liking for a woman is a very complex affair," replied Oliver, smiling. "Suppose your very heathenism attracts this pious John? He may love your soul, poor dear fellow, as well as your inheritance, and your pretty face. He may try to convert you. He may succeed. And then good-by to poor Oliver Black!"

Antoinette's face dimpled all over with smiles at the mock-sorrowful tone with which he spoke. Her look softened, and rested on Oliver Black with shy tenderness.

"How am I to make myself hated?" she asked. "You say he must hate me, or—"

"He will stick to La Maison Dorrien like a leech," sug-

gested Oliver. "Yes, he must hate you. Can't you be very disagreeable, Antoinette, very repellent, etc., I mean, when you two are alone, for please never to try that in the presence of Mr. Dorrien."

The warm blood rushed up to Antoinette's face in a crimson glow.

"I cannot promise that," she said, shortly.

"Don't promise it, but try to do it," answered Oliver, good-humoredly. "Of course it will be excessively difficult for you to be disagreeable!"

"I did not mean that," she interrupted, half laughing; "but indeed I cannot promise to be one thing when I am alone with John, and another when I am not."

Oliver looked annoyed, and she added, deprecatingly:

"You do not know what I have already had to bear. I shall never be able to go through it!—oh, never! I shall be found out, and I shall die with shame! I am sure they are all watching me. The very first morning I was here I got into trouble. I went down early to the garden. I thought I could slip out to aunt through that back door we had talked of, you know, and I was seen, and I denied it, and I am sure," said Antoinette, with a faltering voice, "that John had seen me, and did not believe me."

"My dear girl, why did you deny it?" asked Oliver, opening his eyes wide, and looking puzzled. "Take my word for it, the truth is always the safer plan; and an untruth that has not a very strong motive for it is always dangerous. You should have said that you came down to the garden tempted by the beauty of the morning, that you rememdered so well the old river-god, and your happy childhood, etc. A bit of sentiment would have come in charmingly."

"But, then," said Antoinette, looking at him in evident perplexity, "I should have told ten lies instead of one."

"Yes, but you would not have been found out, and—"

Here the door opened, and John Dorrien entered the room. He gave Oliver Black a surprised look, which the young man answered with an amazed start.

"Don't scold, John," he cried, raising his hands deprecatingly. "I declare, I forgot all about Mr. Brown. I came in here in my heedlessness, and, having entered on an argument with Miss Dorrien, forgot to take myself off."

"What was the argument about?" asked John Dorrien, smiling, and sitting down as he spoke.

"I contended that Windsor Castle beat Versailles hollow, and began describing it for Miss Dorrien's benefit. I am a first-rate hand at description, you know, John."

"Do you think that of Mr. Black?" asked John, bending the searching look of his gray eyes on Antoinette's face.

Her color came and went. She was burning with shame, and trembling with fear.

"I have no doubt Mr. Black describes charmingly," she stammered; "but—but the gift is one I am not capable of appreciating. I think I shall go and help Mrs. Dorrien to look for her smelling-bottle," she breathlessly added. So saying, she rose and walked out of the room.

Oliver stared, and whistled softly.

"John," he asked, in an undertone, "which is it? Has Miss Dorrien taken a dislike to me, or—I say it with due caution—has she got a temper?"

John did not answer one word. He sat looking at Antoinette's vacant place, as if her girlish figure filled it still, and he could read the meaning of her changing face and dark eyes.

"I beg your pardon," he exclaimed, with an absent start. "I am afraid I was not attending. What did you say?"

"Charming!" cried Oliver Black, bursting out into a hearty laugh. "Miss Dorrien leaves the room, declaring she does not care for a word I say, and you quite as plainly inform me that you have not taken the trouble of attending to me. Well, well, Mr. Brown will listen when I make that inquiry about Monsieur Basnage, which I forgot for the young lady's sake."

He left the room, undetained by John Dorrien.

"What could they be talking of?" thought the young man, still looking at Antoinette's vacant chair.

As Oliver closed the door, he saw Antoinette on the stairs. She was standing there in the cold, trying to recover her composure. On seeing Oliver Black, she turned round.

"Oh! never put me in such a position again," she said, addressing him in a low, alarmed tone—"oh! never do it."

"Very well," he composedly answered. Then added, "You will find a note in your bouquet this evening, if you let it fall."

Antoinette looked petrified. Oliver Black laughed softly, and at once entered Mr. Brown's room. He entered it with the same happy, smiling face which he always wore —that face so sweet, so genial, so pleasant, which had won Antoinette's heart, which had fascinated her languid grandfather, and in which even the cold, prudent eyes of Mr. Brown found a charm. Nothing could be pleasanter than the manner after which Oliver now discussed business with the old clerk. His very way of sitting down and drawing his chair forward to the table, and saying, "Now, Mr. Brown, just a five minutes' talk, if you please," was warm and cheering. And then he was so clever! His cleverness was nothing like that of John Dorrien. He did not overpower you with new, acute, penetrating views, showing you too plainly that you had been all wrong, and that old experience was valueless when put in the same scale with young intuition. No; but he understood you at a word, carried out your views in a moment, and never contradicted you. Mr. John Dorrien was invaluable, of course —quite a genius, indeed; but he was self-opinionated and dogmatic, and Mr. Oliver Black was as modest as he was clever. So he and Mr. Brown got on charmingly now as ever; and the old clerk looked at him over his spectacles and smiled, and explained; and Oliver Black talked for ten minutes or so, giving information, and yet finding out a thing or two which Mr. Brown never suspected; and as, when this talk was over, there was still a minute to spare before dinner, he walked out of the old stone house into the dingy old street, with his handsome dark eyes smiling under the brim of his hat, fascinating even the rather acrid lady in the cigar-shop, while he wrote on the counter a few lines destined to be slipped in among the roses which that unsuspecting John Dorrien had given Antoinette. Oliver Black was quite boyish enough to enjoy cheating his unconscious rival under his very nose. The mere thought, indeed, put him into good spirits, and rendered him delightful company during the dinner, which, but for him, would have been rather a dull meal.

Mrs. Reginald and Mrs. John Dorrien had joined An-

toinette and John when Oliver Black entered the sitting-room once more. Only Mr. Brown was wanting, and he came almost immediately. It was well understood that Mr. Brown never left business till the last extremity, and for him to appear was therefore the signal for all to go in to dinner. Mr. Brown took in Mrs. Reginald, Oliver Black gave his arm to Mrs. Dorrien, and John, as a matter of course, was left to Antoinette; but, spite this happy arrangement, the meal, as we have said, was a dull one.

Mr. Brown was hungry and silent; Mrs. Reginald was tired, and, having resolved not to be disagreeable to Oliver Black, she saw no other means of avoiding that pitfall than locking herself up in a citadel of freezing politeness and reserve. Mrs. Dorrien had not found her smelling-bottle, and could have cried, so great was her concern. Antoinette was nervous and uneasy, and John Dorrien had some thoughts of his own which made him rather abstracted. Oliver Black alone was in the best of spirits, and, as we said, delightful company. He was twenty-six, he had good health, a good appetite, and he was enjoying an excellent dinner and first-rate wines, with all the pleasant surroundings which wealth gives, in the company of an agreeable girl, who was fond of him, and whose dowry was, or would be, as he thought, La Maison Dorrien.

The present is much to men of Oliver Black's temperament and tendencies. They have no keen ambition, no far-seeing desires, stretching out into the dimness of the future. The warm air of the room, the scent of John's roses—what matter that they were John's? their fragrance was none the less sweet—the brilliancy of wax-lights, the sparkle of crystal, the ruby hue of Burgundy, the delicate flavor of perfect French cookery, the rosy hue of Antoinette as she sat opposite him, in silk attire, fresh and dainty as a flower—all these present possessions, which he felt certain of securing quickly and for good, were sufficient to exhilarate Oliver Black. This pleasant, lively mood he kept till the close of the meal, when Mrs. Reginald remarked to Antoinette:

"My dear, how sweetly your roses smell!"

"They do," answered Antoinette; "but I am afraid they will fade. I must go and put them in water as soon *as dinner is* over."

She spoke with a sort of eagerness, looking jealously at the roses, which she had placed on a side-table behind her, within reach of her hand. Oliver Black understood her very well. Antoinette's dark eyes, as they turned round and met his once more, were telling him that her flowers should not fall nor be picked up by him. He smiled at Mr. Brown, whom he was addressing, but after that he was rather silent.

"I dare say the gentlemen have business to talk over," remarked Mrs. Reginald, somewhat austerely, as she rose after dessert, thus implying, for Oliver Black's benefit, that, if she complied with the English custom of leaving gentlemen to their wine, she did so with a qualification.

Antoinette pushed back her chair with a sort of eagerness, and clutched her bouquet with both her little hands, as if she feared it would escape her. Oliver looked at her and smiled again as he rose. She had to pass by him on her way to the door.

"You have dropped this," he said, stooping and seeming to pick up something; and, before she was aware of his intention, his note had been thrust into her hand.

Surprise, the fear of discovery, the sense of danger, rendered her helpless and mute. She turned so pale that it was well no one was minding her just then. But Oliver had chosen the right moment. John was looking another way, Mr. Brown was sipping a glass of wine, and Mrs. Reginald and Mrs. Dorrien were already at the door. The very audacity of the act also saved it from detection, and as Antoinette recovered her presence of mind she saw that she had nothing to do but to abet Oliver's daring fiction.

"Thank you," she murmured faintly, and hurried on without looking behind her.

She was scarcely outside the door and at the foot of the staircase, when she said, hurriedly:

"I must go and put my flowers in water at once;" and up she ran, as if the slip of paper in her hand were a coal of fire.

She did not feel as if she could breathe till she entered her room, and even then she locked herself in, like one pursued. With trembling hands she lit her candle and read Oliver's note. It ran thus:

"Tell M—— to take you to the Parc de Monceau tomorrow morning at ten."

As soon as she had read this brief missive, Antoinette burned it, and with a sigh of relief saw it shrink up into a black scroll at her feet. But the relief was short-lived, and the fear soon came back. It is hard to be caught in a net, even though our own hands have tied the knot of its meshes, and Antoinette felt snared by a lie which she had helped to fashion, which she abetting passively, and she knew that she was powerless to tear that cruel net asunder. She was proud, and she hated the baseness of deceit. She was of a free and open temper, and she revolted against the thraldom of the part she was acting; but pride and revolt showed her no means of escape. Oliver Black chose concealment, and, having once consented to it, she must not, she dare not, betray their joint secret. Indeed, she now knew what he had always known, though she had failed to realize it, that such betrayal would be fatal to them both. Mr. Dorrien had left her no doubt on the subject, and John had unconsciously given Mr. Dorrien's words new force. She had been brought to her grandfather's house to marry her cousin, and, save as his future wife, she was nothing in that house. That might be hard—it was hard and bitter too—but it was so, and all her love for Oliver Black, and all his for her, would not change it. She buried her face in her hands; she tried to think, but thought would not come—not, at least, such thought as helps us in our need. Nothing came but the bitter reflection: "I am a deceiver; I shall be found out; they will all despise me, and I shall have deserved it."

The thought of such contempt, and of having brought it on herself, galled her inexpressibly. Until this evening, she had not felt it much; she had put off her cares, for Oliver Black's return; woman-like, she trusted in him. He who had drawn her into this secret engagement would deliver her from its perils; he would speak to Mr. Dorrien; he would claim her; he would set John Dorrien aside; he would make all fair and easy, and let daylight in on this unpleasant darkness. But Oliver Black had come, and his first words had dispelled that illusion. It was evident that he had no wish for daylight, that he meant matters to remain in their present obscurity, that he intended being John Dorrien's friend and Antoinette's lover at the same time, and that he would wait to claim her from Mr. Dorrien till matters wore an aspect wholly different from that which

they had now. The conviction filled Antoinette with a sort of dull despair at her utter helplessness.

She had no past experience to fall back upon and help her out of her troubles. Her life had always been free, open, and harmless; she had never had any thing to hide, and was not familiar with the ways of falsehood. Her innocence had not been that of virtue, but of childhood, and she had fallen into the first temptation, not so much because she liked wrong, as because she knew practically very little about it. Madame Brun had defined her well in calling her a little bird. A little bird she had been, singing gayly on the green bough, till a cunning hand had snared and caged her, and now she was caught, and she might beat her breast against the bars of her prison—all in vain.

A knock at the door of her room disturbed Antoinette's somewhat bitter reflections. With a guilty start, she went and opened it. Mrs. Reginald appeared on the threshold, smiling, and yet reproving.

"Why, my dear," she said, coming in, "what ails you? What keeps you up here all this time? Are you unwell?"

"My head aches," faltered Antoinette.

"Does it?" retorted Mrs. Reginald, with her shrewd side-look; "then I suppose your head made you forget your flowers, for, though you came up to put them in water, there they are half withered. Let me tell you, though, Miss Dorrien," she added, going and putting the roses in Antoinette's water-jug, "that John's flowers deserve better treatment; but then," she added, reflectively, "what should you know of John's worth? Why, I suppose that John would as soon lay down his life and die as do a mean thing."

She paused and looked hard at Antoinette, not, to say the truth, that she thought in the least about her, but because she was just then assimilating the real John and that imaginary Reginald who had been fading out of her life of late years. Antoinette, however, turned pale under that fixed look, and averted her troubled face, while Mrs. Reginald resumed, composedly:

"But, of course, you know nothing of all that. You put him, I dare say, on a level with that little Mr. Black, a man of that sort, whereas light and darkness are not more

different than our John, the best, the finest fellow that ever breathed, and that little sneak of a fellow whom he brought here, Heaven knows why."

"Defend me from my friends," is an old saying. Never had Antoinette felt so nigh hating John as she did now, on hearing him thus exalted by this injudicious partisan at the expense of Oliver Black. Her color rose, her dark eyes flashed. She had to bite her lips to check the sharp answer which resentment dictated, and prudence forbade.

"And even if you did not care for John's roses," continued Mrs. Reginald, whom the unnatural restraint she had laid on her tongue at dinner had rendered aggressive, "you might care for the poor flowers. Why," she added, settling their drooping heads in the water-jug, "don't you know Eve brought them from paradise?"

"Did she?" echoed Antoinette, in a tone which placed Eve among the fables of a worn-out creed.

"My poor child," said Mrs. Reginald, putting her hands behind her back, and speaking with exasperating kindness, "I wonder you can look at these roses, at any flowers, and not feel devout."

But theology, as expounded by Mrs. Reginald, was never very attractive, and Antoinette, though habitually gentle and averse to sharp speech, was fairly roused. Her own troubled conscience had turned every word uttered by her visitor into the bitterest taunt, and John's roses paid for it all. She gave them a lofty look, and said, carelessly:

"Oh! I know that there are many beautiful things in Nature."

"Nature—nonsense!" dogmatically said Mrs. Reginald—"I am sick of Nature. It is Nature here and Nature there, and I say that Nature is like Mrs. Gamp's friend, Mrs. Harris—no one has ever seen her."

"Then there is no such thing as the laws of Nature?" asked Antoinette, a little defiantly. Oliver had told her a good deal about the laws of Nature, and she had not forgotten the lesson.

"The laws of Nature!" ironically repeated Mrs. Reginald—"I am afraid I don't understand, my dear; but, as I never heard of there being laws and no Law-giver, will you kindly tell me who made these laws you speak of? Was *it Nature* whom I call Mrs. Harris, or some one above her?

You talk so positively of the laws of Nature, that I suppose you know all about the matter."

"I have not expressed myself correctly," said Antoinette, reddening with vexation.

"Of course you have not," replied the pitiless lady. "Shall I tell you why, my dear?—because there is no way of expressing nonsense correctly. When the fool said in his heart there is no God, he did not go beyond that word 'no,' fool though he was; he knew better than to talk about the laws of Nature. Why, child, your little sparrow there would know better than to say that, if he could talk."

"You are very hard upon me, Mrs. Reginald," exclaimed Antoinette, feeling and looking ready to cry with vexation. "I never said there was no God."

"No but you spoke of Nature, which is the modern polite way of putting the Almighty out of sight. There is something rather brutal about an atheist, of course, but, do you know, I rather respect the man. He is out and out a burglar, if I may so speak; but as for your plausible swindler, who tries to cheat himself and others out of all faith by such juggling of words as 'Nature' and all that trash, why I despise him. I could just fancy little Mr. Black to talk in that style," added Mrs. Reginald, who had that quality valued by Doctor Johnson of being a good hater.

This unconscious home-thrust roused Antoinette. Her eyes lit, her lips quivered.

"And science, Mrs. Reginald," she said, indignantly—"what have you got to say to science?—you were speaking of it a while ago."

"A bushel of chaff and a grain of wheat," said Mrs. Reginald, coolly. "The wings of old Father Time fan the chaff away, and the wheat remains; but men often take generations to discover that pure grain, and yet young things in ther teens like you quote science against the Almighty. There was a king once, King Alfonso the Wise, I believe, who was a great astronomer, and looking at the heavens (with eyes of science, according to the system of Ptolemy), he was so puzzled by the absurdities he saw there, that he said: 'If God had consulted *me* on all these matters, I could have given him some good advice.' Poor little wise king! It never occurred to him, you see, that God could be right and Ptolemy be wrong, for Ptolemy

was science, and when was science ever mistaken?" sarcastically added Mrs. Reginald. "And though the little king is dead, my dear, I can see that you have fallen in with some of his posterity."

Antoinette started to her feet like one who has been stung.

"My head is better. I shall go down with you, Mrs. Reginald," she said, hurriedly.

"She has got enough of it," thought Mrs. Reginald, with a grim smile of triumph. "This way, my dear," she said aloud, as Antoinette was passing by the door of her sitting-room. "The gentlemen have found out some wonderful piece of business to talk over, and we must be company to each other to-night."

Antoinette, who had dreaded seeing Oliver again, fearing lest every look of her eye, lest every motion of her face, should betray her secret, was disappointed not to see him, and entered Mrs. Reginald's apartment with a depressed look. She sank down rather wearily in the first chair she found, and gazed listlessly at Mrs. Dorrien's pale, faded face and faint smile of welcome.

"You look tired, dear," said the lady. "Yes, Versailles is *so* fatiguing. Dear John never understood it was too much for me. Poor boy, how he raved about it years ago, and how full he was of it when he came back! Do you remember, Mrs. Reginald?"

"Of course I do. The dear boy always was enthusiastic!"

And being fairly launched on the illimitable sea of John Dorrien's attributes, the two ladies soon left land behind, and, so far as Antoinette was concerned, got out of sight, while she staid, rather sad and lonely, on the shore of her own thoughts. She had no part to act, since Oliver was not present. She was safe from that terrible danger of discovery which was to her as the sword of Damocles; but then she had no chance of letting him know that she would not meet him on the next morning, of saying, with studied carelessness, "I am so tired that I shall not stir out-of-doors to-morrow," or any such speech, unmeaning to other ears, significant to his. He did not come, the ladies prosed amicably about John, the hand of the clock traveled over its *white dial*, and still Oliver did not appear.

"Ten!" suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Reginald. "My dear Mrs. John, go off to bed directly.—As for you, dear, I think your room will do your head good. You have been very dull."

"Yes," said Antoinette, rising. "I do not feel good for much."

And so, bidding them both good-night, she went back to her own room, feeling, with a sort of gladness in her inmost heart, "I am not to blame now, if I go and meet Oliver to-morrow. It is that I cannot do otherwise."

But, when she opened the door of her room, closed it, and set her candle down on the table by the open window, through which the night-air came, making the flame tremble, and all but die, in that chill breath, it seemed to Antoinette as if her spirit were quelled like that flame, and was fainting away within her. Mrs. Reginald's biting speeches, which she had forgotten below, being absorbed in other thoughts, all came back to her now, like ghosts who had remained behind in that solitary chamber, lying in wait to haunt her on her return. There are some persons who have a knack of speaking in sword-thrusts, and whose weapon is never sheathed in the thinnest of scabbards. Mrs. Reginald could not hint or imply any thing. She could not tell Antoinette that she was all wrong, unless in the hardest of plain speech. She could not praise John unless with her whole heart, she could not censure Oliver Black unless with unmitigated bitterness and animosity, and thus every blow she dealt told and pierced deep.

Antoinette's whole being felt in a tumult, as every thing that had been said between her and Mrs. Reginald now came back to her mind. She all but detested that overbearing lady, but she could not forget a word she had uttered. The praise of John stung her again as it had stung her when spoken. She felt the cutting sarcasm leveled at Oliver Black as she might feel a blow on the face. Even Mrs. Reginald's theology, though hateful in manner, had disturbed her unbelief. Do what she would, rebel against it as she might, something had been moved within her, something that vexed her inmost heart. Antoinette had been reared in passive irreligion, which Oliver had without effort transformed into an active feeling. With

the eagerness and ardor of the young, she had rushed into the new creed opened before her. A beautiful and marvelous law, pervading all the visible world, had dazzled her imagination, but now that first glow seemed strangely faded, and twilight, deepening into darkness, was closing round her. Belief will always have strong odds against unbelief in the eternal war which these two wage one against the other in the soul of man. For belief asserts, and unbelief denies, and, if one is hard sometimes, the other is ten times harder always.

Antoinette was but a girl, and she had gone neither far nor deep in the path she was treading. Yet these few steps made her aware that she was blind, and did not know the way. Her mind now felt in a tumult. Her own anxieties, the truth or untruth of religion, seemed inextricably mingled. What should she do, what ought she to believe, followed each other in her troubled thoughts as wave follows on wave of the sea. As she went to the window and closed it, she saw a large bright star shining in the darkness of the sky. She gave it a long look of jealous sorrow.

"What need we care about a future life, my darling?" Oliver Black had once said to her when she questioned him on the subject. "No one knows any thing about it, then what need we care?"

The words now came back to her with strange bitterness. The very trouble and anxiety of the present made the future seem more precious. "Who and what are you?" she said in her heart, as she still looked at that light, so remote, though so clear—"what are you, that you should have lived thousands of years, that you should live on thousands more, while I have had but a few years, and may die to-morrow? You are all but immortal—harm cannot reach you; and I was born to suffer, to pass and to perish!"

Alas! the heavens and their planets never yet gave an answer to these questions of the aching human heart. Our sorrows cannot reach so high, and dim their splendor. They look down at us serene and silent, and go on their path in the sky, leaving us on earth sad, weary, and forlorn, till we drop down into the darkness of the grave. From the moment that she had entered her grandfather's house, it had seemed to Antoinette that, when she saw Oliver Black *again*, all her troubles would be over, and all would go well

with her; and, now that she had seen him, she was sorrowful even unto death, and, turning back from the window, she flung herself on her knees beside her bed—not to pray, but to weep—with her face buried in her pillow.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THAT feeling of secretiveness which guided Mr. Dorrien in almost every action of his daily life, which he might deliberately put aside in an emergency, but only to resume it again as soon as the opportunity occurred for doing so, had influenced him in a matter of considerable importance, so far as Antoinette was concerned. John Dorrien had proved invaluable to his cousin. Mr. Dorrien had found it pleasant to lean on that young man, so clever, so hard-working, so thoroughly in earnest about all he took in hand. But we do not always love those who minister to our necessities; and John, though respected and valued by his cousin, was not loved. Mr. Dorrien could surrender his authority, because his judgment compelled him to do so, but he was not generous enough to give his affection, and, what was more, he withheld it deliberately.

"He had given up a position of great trust and authority to Mr. John Dorrien—that was enough."

On that principle, Mr. Dorrien also gave John no more of his confidence than he was strictly obliged to yield him. What he could hide from him he did; such knowledge of his private matters as he could keep, he kept; and he did so all the more jealously that he was compelled to be so open in every thing pertaining to business. It had annoyed him more than he cared to show to be told by his young relative of the deceit Mademoiselle Mélanie had practised upon him, and he had not chosen that John, though he knew this much, should know more. Accordingly, and without saying a word to him on the subject, Mr. Dorrien had written to Oliver Black, and requested him to extend his journey as far as Nice, and there look into this matter, which he detailed fully, ending with the intimation that

he, Mr. Dorrien, would feel much obliged if he, Mr. Black, would kindly keep the result of his inquiries for Mr. Dorrien's own private hearing.

"Poor John!" thought Oliver, laughing softly to himself; "he wanted to keep it very quiet, and, lo! Mr. Dorrien sends me to the very nest of his dove."

This was not exactly the case. Mr. Dorrien's instructions, while they concerned Mademoiselle Mélanie only, did not even imply that Mr. Black need see that lady; but Mr. Black had his own views—his temper was cool and daring, and, at the risk of forfeiting Mr. Dorrien's favor, he chose to set about this matter after a fashion of his own.

Unconscious of the thunder-bolt that was going to fall upon her, Mademoiselle Mélanie sat picking greens in the parlor—more kitchen than parlor—of the little house of La Ruya, of which John Dorrien had never crossed the threshold. The door stood half-open, and a flood of autumn sunshine filled the shabby room, with its old commonplace brown furniture. The strong warm light fell on Mademoiselle Mélanie's sitting figure, clad in rusty black garments. It touched her sallow face and hair of iron gray, and flickered on her thin, restless hands. As Oliver Black stood in the entrance, throwing his shadow on the red tiles of the floor, he thought that, if this lady's niece were like her aunt in appearance, John need never fear a rival in his future bride's favor. He gave a rapid look round the room in search of Miss Dorrien. A bird in his cage in the window, a few wild-flowers in a glass on the table, and a straw hat hanging against the wall, told about her; but she was invisible. He heard her, however, singing gayly up-stairs, with a light, cheerful young voice, that matched with the beauty of the sunny morning. While Oliver stood thus looking and listening, he was undergoing examination from eyes no less searching than his own. Mademoiselle Mélanie put by her vegetables, rose, and, going up to him, said, in a cool, yet aggressive voice:

"They do not live here."

She spoke in French. In the same language Oliver answered blandly:

"I believe I have the honor of addressing Mademoiselle Mélanie."

She gave him a swift look of her dark eyes. Did she

detect some subtile mockery in his tone? Was she gifted with that sort of intuition which belongs to low, keen minds, who see earthly things all the better that they never can soar into higher and purer regions? Or was his English accent, though slight, enough to betray him to one who must long have been on the watch for discovery? Oliver could not tell, but he felt that she knew who had sent, and what had brought him.

"Deep calleth on deep," says the Psalmist, in words of terrible import.

As these two stood facing each other, a meaning passed from Mademoiselle Mélanie's dark eyes, keen and hard, to those other dark eyes of Oliver Black's, so laughing and so soft; and from his it went back to hers. Each knew that in the other one standing there an accomplice could be found at need—one ready and willing for guilt. No compact passed between them, and yet in a moment, and by that look, the way to a future understanding was made clear and easy.

"I am Mademoiselle Mélanie," said the lady, in answer to his question.

"And I am sent by Mr. Dorrien," said he.

She motioned him carelessly to be seated, and, resuming her own chair, uttered a laconic "Well?"

"Well, Mr. Dorrien has learned with surprise that his daughter-in-law, Mrs. George Dorrien, had been dead a year and more."

"A year and a month," corrected Mademoiselle Mélanie.

"Mr. Dorrien has accordingly requested me to ask you to explain, as no doubt you can, how he happened to be kept in ignorance of so important a fact as this."

"I might say show me your credentials," she answered, defiantly; "but, as I do not care for them, nor for Mr. Dorrien, I will simply say this—I have nothing to explain."

"Excuse me if I say that Mr. Dorrien should have been apprised of Mrs. George Dorrien's death?"

Mademoiselle Mélanie laughed scornfully.

"What did he care for his son's widow? He never troubled himself about her once she was here. What did she care about him? She was not Mrs. George Dorrien once she left his house. She was the Comtesse d'Armaille."

"Excuse me again. Mr. Dorrien has a granddaughter. He had a right to know that she had become an orphan."

"Why so? Did he ever write a line to know whether she was alive or dead? And what did it matter that she was an orphan? Her mother was the silliest little fool that ever lived!"

"Excuse me again," returned the imperturbable Oliver Black, "but a pecuniary question was involved in this matter. Mrs. George Dorrien received an allowance from Mr. Dorrien, and he has learned with surprise that receipts purporting to be signed by her at dates subsequent to that of her death are lying at the bankers in Nice."

Mademoiselle Mélanie raised her eyebrows, as if in some scorn of this stranger's obtuseness.

"If Mr. Dorrien had questioned the banker," answered she, "he might have learned that I have always signed the receipts for my sister-in-law, from the first to the last."

"Indeed!" said Oliver, looking much surprised, although he was already aware of that fact, so significant of the relations between the two ladies.

"Yes, sir, indeed!" echoed Mademoiselle Mélanie, looking more defiant than ever.

Oliver Black smiled good-naturedly.

"I shall leave that matter to Mr. Dorrien," he said; "but allow me to ask—I no longer speak as commissioned by him—how it never occurred to you that Mr. Dorrien might have views for his granddaughter with which your long silence has probably interfered."

The sudden flash in Mademoiselle Mélanie's dark eyes showed Oliver that he had found the weak spot in her armor.

"Views!—what views?" she cried, excitedly. "He shall not do what he likes with my niece! I know what you mean, sir; but neither Mr. Dorrien, nor that little beggar, his cousin, nor that Mrs. Reginald, with her one eye, shall dispose of my niece, sir!"

Oliver smiled, amused at this sudden burst; he also eyed Mademoiselle Mélanie curiously. After all, she was only a woman, and her feelings (as women call their nerves) could get the better of her. He certainly felt infinitely her superior in this respect, and he wondered—he really did—what could move him thus into utter forgetfulness of his self-control.

"I am afraid I have gone too far," he began, with apparent hesitation; but if he spoke slowly it was because he was listening to a light step coming down the stairs, and purposely gave it time to draw nearer; "but, to say the truth—" here the door opened, and Antoinette entered the room.

She paused just for one moment, with the door in her hand, looking at the stranger in surprise; then she closed the door, and came forward slowly, while Mademoiselle Mélanie said, with bitter emphasis:

"Monsieur is a friend of Mr. Dorrien's, Antoinette."

A cold shadow seemed to pass over the young girl's bright, surprised face; she stood awhile, silent and reserved; then she said, but without any show of emotion or friendliness:

"Pray, how is Mr. Dorrien, sir?"

Oliver Black, standing before her as in the presence of some exalted lady of the land, answered, with the deepest deference, that Mr. Dorrien was quite well. Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter was probably not accustomed to such show of respect, for she gave the courteous stranger a look of some wonder, then, with a little bend of her head, she went on and sat by the window, and began settling the cage of her bird.

"You are going down the road," said Mademoiselle Mélanie, rising and looking hard at Oliver Black; "so am I. We can talk as we walk along, and thus you need lose no time."

"You are most considerate," replied Oliver Black, with his dark eyes full of laughter.

It amused him exceedingly to see how quickly Mademoiselle Mélanie and he came to the mutual understanding that Antoinette was to be excluded from the knowledge of whatever passed between them. With a deep, reverent bow to Miss Dorrien, who rose and courtesied shyly, he left the house, standing by to let Mademoiselle Mélanie pass first.

From the window where she stood Antoinette saw them go down the road. Her surprise at the sudden appearance of this handsome stranger was mingled with vague uneasiness. When a life is very still and lonely, every breath ruffles its surface, every new face is pregnant with a meaning which seems either blissful or fatal.

Antoinette could not go on feeding her bird. She took up her work, and threw it down again; she felt restless and perplexed. The world, under the aspect of Oliver Black, had entered her solitude, and, though the glimpse had lasted but one moment, it effaced every other image. Whatever spot of the room she looked at, he seemed to be standing there, looking at her with a sort of courteous admiration in his handsome young face and soft, dark eyes, which Antoinette would not have been woman if she had not understood.

Mademoiselle Mélanie did not remain long away. She no sooner entered the parlor than Antoinette broke in upon her with eager inquiry.

"O aunt, who is that gentleman?"

"A friend of your grandfather's, it seems."

"Do not you know his name, aunt?"

"His name?—let me see. Oh, yes, he told me his name—Oliver Black."

"Why, John Dorrien had a friend called Oliver Blackmore!" cried Antoinette, eagerly.

"I dare say that is the same. He is something or other in Mr. Dorrien's firm."

"Oh, how sorry I am I did not know that!" cried Antoinette, with sincere concern in her look and voice; "he would have told me all about him, I am sure."

"About him!—and what do you want to know about him?" asked Mademoiselle Mélanie, turning sharply on her niece.

"I should like to know whether he is alive or dead," replied Antoinette, with a sigh. "Poor Carlo!"

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said Mademoiselle Mélanie, with a short laugh. "I really thought you meant your cousin, Mr. John Dorrien."

"No," quietly answered Antoinette, "I did not—poor little Carlo! I suppose he is very old now? Do you think that Mr. Black will call again, aunt?"

"I should say not—unless he has fallen in love with you," sarcastically answered Mademoiselle Mélanie.

"Then I wish he may have fallen in love with me," exclaimed Antoinette, a little petulantly, "for I want to hear all about Carlo."

The opportunity she wished for came that same after-

noon, for, on a pretense which even Antoinette felt to be slight indeed, Oliver Black called again. As he pushed open the door of the little parlor, and entered, Mademoiselle Mélanie gave him a sharp, amazed stare, then looked from him to her niece with so much significance that Antoinette, who was sewing, bent her blushing face over her work, and scarcely knew how to raise it again.

After a while she rallied sufficiently to put that question concerning Carlo which lay so near her heart. Oliver Black looked all deferential interest as he replied:

"Oh! certainly. A beautiful little white creature! I remember him perfectly. A great favorite with Mr. Dorrien."

"But it was to John I left him," exclaimed Antoinette, "to John Dorrien himself. Has he given him to Mr. Dorrien?" she asked, with a look of disappointment.

Oliver thought so, but was not sure. Of one thing only he was certain: Carlo, on the day on which he left Paris, was in excellent health and spirits, and certainly, if an ardent wish to bite Mr. Black's shins could be taken as proof of either state, Mr. Black's declaration was a very true one. Antoinette brightened as she heard him, then, meeting his look of silent admiration, she again bent over her work.

The thought of love is one that is quick to come to woman in her youth. The gates of ambition are ready for man. He can hope to attempt them all, and to win one in the end. Woman knows early that her frail hand can open but one door, that which leads to the lost paradise of her first mother, Eve. In that Eden it is given her to wander a few days. A few heavenly mornings she can spend there when the flowers are still in their prime, when the dew of heaven still lies on the grass. Later, the same thorns and briers which are Adam's inheritance will invade Eden itself, and turn it into the every-day world; but at first it is all celestial, and, like all beautiful things, it seems within reach, easy to win, easier still to keep.

Antoinette would have been no woman if she had not felt as Oliver Black meant her to feel, as Mademoiselle Mélanie's sharp looks and sour manner implied, that he had come back for her. And he conveyed his meaning all the more successfully that he need act no part in order to do so. Antoinette without beauty, without even an unusual

share of woman's graces, was eminently pleasing and attractive. She had a subtile charm which other women failed to comprehend, and certainly could not imitate, and by which the hearts of men, young and old, were drawn toward her, without effort on her part. Her soft eyes, her laughing lips, and blooming young face, were great enslavers, even when she had no wish to subdue. But, to do Oliver Black justice, though he was man enough to appreciate these fleeting charms, more solid attractions than mere outward graces drew him toward Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter. He saw her through the magic prism of fortune and golden hopes. The heiress of La Maison Dorrien, the girl through whom a position, a luxurious home, and all the comforts and elegances of life could be won, must have been plain indeed, if he had not found a certain fairness in her face; but, being as she was, he thought her charming, fell in love forthwith, and lost no time in making her fall in love with him.

The task was an easy one, too easy by far. Mademoiselle Mélanie had unlocked the gate of the citadel, and Antoinette was left undefended at the enemy's mercy. Alas! she never thought of resistance. A man, young, handsome, and pleasing, implied by every glance of his eyes, and every tone of his voice, that to him she was fair among women; and she believed him, and tender gratitude for being thus chosen mingled with her belief. He came asking for love in every word and look, and Antoinette gave him what he asked for, and never attempted to deny. The very truth of her nature was against her, and when the wakening came, and with it fear, it was all too late.

Some business or other which Mademoiselle Mélanie and Mr. Black had to transact, but which to Antoinette seemed both perplexing and endless, made that gentleman call every day, sometimes twice a day, for a week. He came from Nice, and ignored Madame Brun's establishment. Oliver Black was no Spartan, and he contended that, as this world was full of good things, as it abounded in fowl, fish, game, delicious fruit, and delicate viands, a man of sense ought, considering that life was brief and uncertain, to make the best of his time. Accordingly he staid, "on principle," at the best hotels, and never, unless under the direst necessity, encountered discomfort of

any kind. His continued visits were a very pleasant variety in Antoinette's dull life, but seemed to be quite a trouble to Mademoiselle Mélanie.

"I wish that young man would not pester me so," she would say, fretfully. "He surely must have time to lose to be coming so often. Why, all this could have been settled the very first day, if he had any sense in him."

When Antoinette heard this and similar speeches, what could she do but turn her blushing face away, and conclude that Oliver Black lingered over business and came twice a day for her sake. She wondered—simple child!—at her aunt's blindness, and she never thought that that aunt of hers was Oliver Black's accomplice—that she had been sold by the one and bought by the other.

And so matters went on, till Oliver Black ceased coming, without having bid Antoinette adieu, or implied, even remotely, that his visits must soon cease. Antoinette wondered, then she grew dull, then she fretted, then she woke to the consciousness that this stranger of whom she knew so little was dear to her. He had come at the moment when his suit could scarcely help prospering—when the death of her mother, and the ungenial bitterness of her aunt—when the loneliness of her life, severed from friendship, social intercourse, pleasure, and even the slightest recreations, unless such as her lonely walks could give her, made Antoinette's whole being feel the want of something to cling to—something that could love her a little, and that she could love very much in return. That want Oliver supplied. In a moment, without a thought, without a fear, she had given him her heart. She did not know, she did not even suspect it, till he suddenly vanished out of the life he was making so bright. Then, indeed, she felt with unutterable bitterness that she was in his power, and that she might never see him again. Before she had time to recover from the shock of the discovery, Oliver returned as suddenly as he had departed. With sparkling eyes he looked into her happy face, and while he read her secret there, he told her his—if not in words, at least in a language which Antoinette understood.

Mademoiselle Mélanie received her visitor with marked coldness, and when he was gone she turned to her niece with much severity of aspect. The young girl stood in

the window, gazing at the mountains far away. They looked very gorgeous in their autumn beauty, with their rocky heights all flushed and burning in the light of the setting sun. But Antoinette saw them not. She had just opened the door of Eden, and slipped in; and in her paradise the sun never set, and autumn, however fair, never came.

"Antoinette!" said Mademoiselle Mélanie, almost sternly.

Antoinette looked round at her relation with startled eyes; she had a presentiment of what was coming.

"That Mr. Black must not be coming after you, you know."

"Aunt!" Antoinette could say no more; she was crimson.

"Mr. Dorrien has other views," resumed Mademoiselle Mélanie, rather bitterly. "I believe he intends you for that cousin of his—the tall boy, to whom you gave Carlo."

Antoinette's color faded, and for a moment she looked the picture of dismay; but she rallied quickly, and answered steadily:

"I remember John Dorrien very well, and I am sure I shall never marry *him*."

"And suppose Mr. Dorrien insists upon it?"

"Mr. Dorrien does not care enough about me to insist upon any thing; but I am very sure I shall never marry John Dorrien."

Mademoiselle Mélanie nodded and looked ironical.

"Yes, yes," said she; "but when it comes to the point you will do it."

"But why should I?" cried Antoinette, indignantly. "What kindness has my grandfather shown me, that I should marry any one at his bidding? Has Mr. Black said any thing about it to you?" she added, with sudden fear and perplexity. "Is that why he comes here?"

Mademoiselle Mélanie looked at her with a sort of contempt.

"You must be very dull indeed," she answered, "if you do not see that Mr. Black is coming on his own account."

Antoinette answered not one word, but she looked once more at the mountains. The red sunlight had faded away

from their rugged peaks; they rose in dark and stern outlines in the pale evening sky. But Antoinette smiled divinely; she had entered paradise once more.

Mademoiselle Mélanie said not another word; she had said enough. She was out when Oliver called the next morning; and he made his opportunity good, and John Dorrien's bride was lost and won before Mademoiselle Mélanie's return. She seemed very angry when Oliver Black went up to her, leading Antoinette, and, with a look of manly frankness, told her what had happened, and that her niece and he, having discovered that they could not live apart and be happy, were now pledged to each other for ever and ever.

"A pair of fools," she said, eying them contemptuously, as they stood before her hand in hand—"a pair of fools. Antoinette is penniless, and what have you, sir?"

"The will to work for two," answered Oliver, smiling.

But, spite this charming answer, Mademoiselle Mélanie was not pacified at once. Antoinette had to coax her round, and even to shed a few tears, before her consent was won. It was not given unconditionally.

"No one," stipulated Mademoiselle Mélanie, "and above all, Mr. Dorrien, should be told a word of what had happened." And, until Antoinette had solemnly pledged herself to secrecy, Mademoiselle Mélanie maintained the greatest rigor of aspect.

"Very well, aunt," exclaimed the young girl, somewhat emphatically; "but you ought to know that Mr. Dorrien does not care what becomes of me."

"I know what I am saying," persisted Mademoiselle Mélanie, morosely.—"Are you aware," she added, looking hard at Oliver Black, "that Mr. Dorrien formerly thought of betrothing his granddaughter to your friend John Dorrien, and that he may still have that fancy, for all I know to the contrary?"

Consternation and dismay appeared on Oliver Black's handsome face.

"You cannot mean it," he said, in a low tone—"you cannot mean *that?*"

"Oh! yes, I do," sarcastically answered Mademoiselle Mélanie, "every word of it."

"O Antoinette," said the young man, taking her hand,

and looking sorrowfully down in her face, "what will you think of me—I am supplanting my best friend?"

"You are supplanting no one," answered Antoinette, looking up at him with her clear eyes. "I would never have had him—never, Mr. Black."

Mademoiselle Mélanie laughed, and even Oliver Black smiled; but Antoinette no more read the smile of the one than she understood the laugh of the other; and thus the girl's fate was decided, and she fell into the pit which a woman's mingled greed and revenge, and an unscrupulous man's ambition, had dug beneath her feet.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THERE was this much good in Oliver Black, that he liked Antoinette none the less for deceiving her. The simplicity and inexperience which made her so easy a prey, the childish trust which never suggested a doubt of truth, were sweet to him. He was also young enough to feel fond of a girl who liked him so frankly, and whatever was amiable in his nature went forth toward Antoinette, and endeared him to her with every passing hour. And amiable Oliver was after a fashion. He had grown up so in manner and bearing quite naturally. It was pleasant to him to be liked. Principle he had not, and did not care to have; he sincerely thought it superfluous. Yet he was not incapable of a certain honesty of judgment. The one really good trait in him had appeared at Mr. Blackmore's death. On learning how he legally stood, the unacknowledged child of a gentleman, the penniless son of a man of fortune, Oliver had accepted his hard fate with philosophic composure, and not uttered one word to reproach the man who, after rearing him in habits of luxury, left him shame and poverty by way of inheritance. He was man enough not to rail at Fortune, and candid enough to confess to himself that he might have behaved no better than Mr. Blackmore—"perhaps not half so well," said Oliver to his own thoughts; "besides, the old boy liked me, and he would have done something for me if he had had time, I know."

But with this temperate view of his wrongs ended Mr. Oliver Black's impartiality. Set him face to face with life and other men, and he was resolved to get the best to be had out of both. He must have comfort, he must have ease, he must have money, and smoke the best cigars, and drink choice wines, and wear broadcloth, and have the love of some pretty woman or other; and he must stand well in life, and gild that fatal bar in his scutcheon, and float smoothly down the tide of fortune. That he, Oliver Black, should sink, and not swim, was as much out of the question as that he should not make a stepping-stone of John Dorrien, when his old friend so kindly gave him the opportunity of doing so. It is hard to fight one's way up, to make a fortune out of nothing by way of beginning—some men have done it, nay, do it daily; but Oliver Black was too indolent to attempt any thing of the kind—to step in another man's shoes was far more easy. John Dorrien had been slaving seven years to raise a falling house, but Oliver Black felt no scruple in supplanting him, and reaping the fruit of his labor. To save himself from so grievous a fate as that of poverty was merely self-preservation, and self-preservation is a law of Nature, and Oliver Black was the man to obey it without a particle of remorse. It was awkward, it was unpleasant even, but it must be done—to throw away such a chance would be to deserve never to have another.

The thought, indeed, of taking the place of his friend did not come at once. There was not much hypocrisy or self-deceit about Oliver's inner man, but there was enough to make him comfortable within as he was pleasant without. He laid down to himself no deliberate plan of treachery. Why should he? When a man is always ready to pluck the fruit at hand, must he be forever scheming about robbing orchards? When it suited him to do wrong, he did it, but he took no pleasure in it. He was not cruel, he was not unkind, but he had a terrible attribute, which many men whose actions were worse than his never had. He was remorseless—he knew little pity, and no regret.

Thus, when it occurred to him that Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter might be worth having, he at once made up his mind to see her; and when, having seen her, he found that she was quite pleasant enough in his eyes to make marriage endurable with her, no foolish scruples held him back. He

had studied this life, and always seen that in the world's eyes success justifies most things. With regard to the life to come, he quietly ignored it. He had early reduced his decalogue to one simple command: "Make Oliver Black comfortable in this world, and as to the next, why, my dear boy, will it not be time to see about that when Oliver Black gets there?"

One of the pleasant necessities of this world now lay upon him in the duty of making love to Antoinette, and his love-making was all the more fervent that he had little time to spare. He had ingeniously telegraphed himself very unwell with influenza to Mr. Dorrien; but even influenza is limited, and he knew he could not prolong his absence beyond ten days, so he made the best of his time and of his opportunities. These were few; Mademoiselle Mélanie was too mistrustful to leave him alone with Antoinette. She watched him closely and keenly; yet two or three times circumstances were too much for her, and the lovers had a view of their inner nature which her presence might have delayed.

The first time that this happened, the revelation she thus got made a deep impression on Antoinette. She had taken her lover to her favorite haunt, the deserted villa of the Clarkes. Mademoiselle Mélanie had said, "Go on first —I shall follow you directly," but something had no doubt occurred to delay her, for they went on alone, and looked for her in vain down the road when they stood by the iron gate.

"I told her we were coming here," said Antoinette, pushing the gate open. "She knows where to find us."

She walked on, with her light, dainty step and graceful carriage, looking, thought Oliver, a very charming young creature in that deserted avenue of cypress-trees. They were very old and solemn of aspect, and they rose in dark majesty, with here and there a flush of sunset touching a projecting bough, and the pale-blue air of a southern sky for a background to their sombre masses. Oliver's sensuous nature was not without poetry. Those heathen emperors who sent Christians to the lions, who poisoned or murdered their best friends, who stopped at nothing, had a keen sense of the beautiful for all that. They liked the finest statues and the fairest gardens, and they made themselves homes of

which the loveliness has remained as a byword. Oliver's moral unscrupulousness by no means interfered with his appreciation of scenery. It was delicate and refined, and he now found a tender charm in the aspect of this deserted garden.

"We can wait for aunt here," said Antoinette, sitting down on the upper step of the *perron* leading to the forsaken house.

She, too, felt the sweetness of that fair evening hour. She clasped her hands around her knees, she looked at the faint-blue promontory stretching on the pale sea, at the rich mountains stooping down with their forest-crown to the rocky shore, and she felt blest in her very heart. A large, beautiful star was rising slowly above the horizon, and, as it rose, Antoinette's eyes followed it, and her spirit seemed to rise with it higher and higher to new regions of happiness and beauty.

Oliver, too, felt happy. He had half stretched himself at her feet, and his hand had sought and was clasping one of hers, so little, so soft and warm. His look rested on her rosy young face with tender pleasure. What a dear little thing she was!—how sweet, how graceful! How pleasant it would be to have her in his house, not clothed in such shabby garments as those she wore—Oliver had no weakness for beauty unadorned—but attired in shining silks, with glittering jewels and soft laces, and all that can give a more delicate grace to woman's loveliness!

"Darling," he suddenly said, "don't you hate being poor?"

Antoinette, who was far gone in Eden, felt somewhat startled at so terrestrial a question; but she replied, with a pleasant laugh:

"No; why should I? I have been used to it too long."

"Well, I have not, that is true," he said. But yet don't you hate it?"

"No," she slowly answered, "I do not."

She would have added that poverty with him had something delightful in it, but maiden modesty held back the frank confession. Oliver looked at her with some wonder. Was she speaking her real sentiments, or was this one of those conversational untruths which people are apt to utter almost unmeaningly?

"Why should I hate being poor?" she resumed. "I am young, I have good health, I never feel dull, and—and—"

"And what?"

"And there is some one who says he is very fond of me," she said, in a low voice.

"You are a darling! But for all that, my dear girl, I hate being poor. The mere thought that my pocket might be empty some day sends a cold thrill through me. Moreover, and above all things, I hate seeing you poor, and poor you shall not be; no, as true as my name is Oliver Black, you shall be a rich girl yet."

"Thank you," she laughed. "I suppose you mean to make a fortune for me?"

"Of course I do, and to take you to my poor father's château; but, *en attendant*, you shall have your own, ay, that you shall. Nothing shall stand between me and that object."

"My own?" asked Antoinette, smiling. "And what is my own, Oliver?"

"Your grandfather's inheritance, to be sure. John Dorrien is the best fellow in the world, but it makes my blood boil to see how he has usurped your place. You must get it back, Antoinette. John must be content to be a clerk, as I am. What would have been your father's, if he had lived, must be yours. It is not fair that a third or fourth cousin should possess it."

"Well, I do not think it is," said Antoinette, naïvely. "Only, if my grandfather does not like me, what can be done?"

"But your grandfather shall like you, and you shall not be defrauded, not while I have brains, and will, and energy, to prevent it," rejoined Oliver, with much emphasis. "Let John Dorrien take his proper place in the firm, the first, if you like, but let him do no more. It is too bad that he should be lord and master in Mr. Dorrien's house."

"It is hard," said Antoinette, reflectively. "O Oliver, do look at that star; how clear, how glorious it is!"

Oliver, did not look at that star, but at Antoinette's face, raised in tender admiration. His own darkened a little. How slight an impression he had produced, and yet this was *not* the first time that he had placed John Dorrien before

her as the usurper of her rights. How was this? Was there some fatal flaw in this girl's nature, some feminine weakness, that rendered her incapable of resentment and ambition; some imperfection, that denied her that active love of money which leads the many so far?

Antoinette's next remark turned that uneasy doubt into unpleasant certainty. His question had awakened a train of thought of which he was unconscious. The allusion to her unknown father had recalled her little, childish mother, and with the memory came a question, startling and awkward to a man of Mr. Black's turn of mind.

"Oliver do you think it is any use praying for the dead?"

Oliver's arched eyebrows nearly met, though he looked smilingly up into the face of his young mistress, but he was too self-possessed to answer her with a sneer, so he said, gently:

"Well, it can do them no harm. But why do you put the question, darling?"

"Because," sadly said Antoinette, "Aunt Mélanie says it is no use, that all is over when life is ended, and that the dead have no souls to pray for. What do you think, Oliver?"

She looked at him with anxious, pleading eyes. Woman-like, she came to her lover as to a teacher, and, woman-like, too, she had felt with this first love the wakening of spiritual longings for soul and immortality. Antoinette had been reared in simple, practical irreligion. Mademoiselle Mélanie was an open infidel, and Antoinette's mother stood too much in awe of her sister-in-law to go against her teaching, if teaching it could be called. Mademoiselle Mélanie's atheism was simple negation. She never worried herself about the truth or error of religion. She had other thoughts, other cares, other sources of bitterness. To all that Antoinette could ask or say she returned a scornful "No," or, "Don't be a fool," by way of answer, until the child ceased to question, and Mrs. George Dorrien weepingly requested her never to talk to her aunt on those subjects. It was too dreadful, she said. Indeed, she considered the theme so trying, that she eluded it entirely, and, being too indolent and too languid to give her child any teaching of her own, she allowed her to grow up as she pleased, untaught to adore or to pray, simply conscious that men and women used

certain forms of worship, but that one could live very easily without them.

Books had done little to supply the deficiency. Antoinette had read general literature, and this, as a rule, does not say much of the spiritual world. It often misinterprets it, and oftenest of all it ignores it. "Let us not talk of these things," it seems to say to the reader in Virgil's memorable words to Dante; "but look and pass on." *Guarda e passa* —sad words to deal with man's greatest hope and noblest aspiration—thought! But, so it is. Christianity, by having passed into the hearts of all, has lost the place which ancient wisdom gave to its philosophic speculations. The catechism has taught us more than Plato ever knew, and divine truths have become common good. But perhaps the great number who possess such knowledge do not realize the utter ignorance of those to whom it has not been granted; and Antoinette was sadly, strangely ignorant. Even her brief intercourse with the Clarkes had done nothing to enlighten her. They held erratic views on most subjects, and as every member of the family seemed inclined to travel on a separate spiritual path, Antoinette had found it more pleasant and more convenient not to attempt following any of them. That too was easy, for they were not zealous, and cared chiefly for the society of the Countess d'Armaillé's daughter. Thus, when she now turned to Oliver for knowledge, Antoinette had a good fund of ignorance for him to work upon; but she had also a wakening, questioning spirit, and this made the task rather trying and awkward.

Oliver was not ignorant, by any means. He had been taught religion by Abbé Véran, and irreligion by Mr. Granby. He had also flirted with every philosophic system of the day, and made himself a little creed of his own—pleasant, comfortable, easy, and convenient. Mr. Granby gave him a tincture of Hegel to begin with, but Oliver was too matter-of-fact to believe that all he felt within and saw without himself was, as Mr. Granby expressed it, "a development of the idea." He might have been an Hegelian so far as moral laws went, for he really considered them amiable illusions; but he liked his sensations, and objected to calling them ideas.

"Nonsense, Mr. Granby!" he said coolly; "the flavor I find on this cognac is something more than the develop-

ment of an idea. I have a fancy I should like Comte—let us try him."

Mr. Granby did not like Comte, but he wanted to please his pupil, so they went into Comte for a time. Positivism was rather congenial to Oliver's turn of mind, but Comte himself amused him exceedingly. Foolish man, who had no faith in penance, and who ate dry bread for his dessert, who denied the divine origin of man, and who invented the religon of humanity, who prayed for hours daily, and had no God.

"Don't you think, Mr. Granby, that Comte was rather cracked?" asked Oliver, who, if he was willing to worship humanity, was like many another disciple of Comte, only willing to do so provided humanity meant himself.

"Most of these clever fellows are cracked," composedly answered Mr. Granby; "but these vagaries have nothing to do with Comte's method, you know."

"Of course not. I wonder if that Clotilde de Vaux, whom Comte adored in life, and worshiped in death—did he not pray to her, Mr. Granby? I wonder if she was handsome, or whether her beauty was a product of the idea?"

Mr. Granby thought the lady was plain. Women who exercised such extraordinary fascination were often plain —they left so much to the imagination.

Philosophy thus studied was pleasant enough, and so Oliver trifled with Hegel and Comte, and went through pantheism, and eclecticism, and every other "ism," until, as we have said, he made himself a little creed of his own. He ignored the Almighty with Comte, and agreed with pantheism that the universe, instead of being created, had simply developed itself. He did not, however, go far or deep into the question of his origin. *Cui bono?* What matter where we come from, or, as to that, where we go to, so long as the present time can be made pleasant? He was young, he was handsome, he was strong, or held himself so. The world was all before him, the world and its kingdoms. He too had heard the voice which tempted Eve, and through whose sorcery Adam fell—"Ye shall be gods." It was pleasant to self-love, to pride, to bow to no Divine Master, to hold the old ideas of sin and virtue worn-out creeds, and to laugh softly at the weak herds who cling to them still.

It was comfortable to believe, with one of his philosophers, that man "has a sovereign right to all he can do;" and that those laws which the decencies of civilization require are the only restraint he need acknowledge. Oliver had neither the low instincts nor the violent passions which make vulgar criminals. He could take the good out of life, out of men and women, and yet not steal nor kill. Even when from Oliver Blackmore he became Oliver Black, his philosophic speculations produced no apparent change in his manner or feelings. He was still the same pleasant, easy, good-humored young man that he had been. The keen ambition which his downfall had wakened, the remorseless determination to still enjoy the good things of this world that had come with poverty, were not to be read in the soft and laughing dark eyes, or in the irresistible smile, of the late Mr. Blackmore's unacknowledged son.

What the world did not know, Oliver did not see any necessity to tell it; and he would have found it more convenient not to touch on such vexed questions as these which Antoinette now raised with her searching eyes fastened on his. So, though he answered her, he felt his ground first.

"Dearest," he said, with a half sigh, "why talk of such things? Men and women are fated to disagree on some topics, and this, I fear, is one. They are trained differently, and, sad to say, grow far, too far, apart."

Atoinette fired up at once.

"Why should that be?" she asked.

"Oh! why indeed?" he sighed. "Well, I do think that star wonderfully beautiful."

"You will not answer me," said Antoinette, mortified. "You think I could not understand these matters. I am not so ignorant as you think."

Oliver protested he did not think her ignorant—"only of course her opportunities in La Ruya—"

"As if I had always lived in La Ruya," interrupted Antoinette. "Why, we only came here two years ago, when aunt was so unlucky at Monaco."

"Poor Mademoiselle Mélanie!" feelingly said Oliver, taking care not to look surprised—"was she so very unlucky?"

"Oh! very. She gambled all we had, and we have been

dreadfully pinched ever since. But I had masters before then, and I have learned plenty of things."

"Where?" asked Oliver.

"In London, in Brussels, in Rome," was the triumphant answer. "We did not stay long anywhere, however; and aunt never would let me learn music. Of course, once she had taken to Monaco, it was out of the question. But when the Clarkes were here," added Antoinette, looking wistfully at the closed windows of the villa, "I studied with them."

"Crochet?" suggested Oliver.

"All sorts of things," answered Antoinette, with much dignity. "Latin with Tom."

"How old was Tom?"

"Thirteen. I got on better with Latin than he did; but, then, poor Tom was stupid. And I am sure I could understand all about those things which you think so much beyond me."

"I only thought you might not be accustomed to philosophic speculations," said Oliver.

"What matter? I am sure I could understand them all the same," answered Antoinette, with the calm audacity of young people.

Oliver smiled, and ventured on gratifying her. Cautiously and skillfully he played with some of the vexed questions which lie at the root of belief and unbelief. Antoinette was profoundly ignorant of these matters, but she was quick, and she listened with rapt attention. Oliver could be fluent when he pleased, and her intent face both pleased and flattered him. Not for any thing would Antoinette have lost a word which he uttered. It seemed so fine, so grand, that wonderful vision of an uncreated world ever developing itself in vast, unbroken progress—man the Lord and God of it all.

"How splendid!" cried Antoinette, looking around her, as if this beautiful universe suddenly bore another meaning.

Oliver smiled good-naturedly at her enthusiasm.

"Yes, darling," he softly said, "it is splendid, as you say; but you are large-minded, and can understand. Women, as a rule, do not take to pantheism; they are rather narrow, and prefer monotheism."

"And yet it is so fine, so very fine, that hidden power

pervading all we see," said Antoinette, still ardent. "And, Oliver, what do you think about praying for the dead?"

If Oliver had been a zealot, he could scarcely have helped being gently exasperated at so outrageous a question. Here was a would-be pantheist talking with monotheist ideas of the dead! As if the dead were more than a memory or a name! But, being no zealot, and being willing to make allowances for the emotional nature of woman, he checked a strong temptation to laugh, and, struck with a brilliant idea, plunged into that portion of positivism which the disciples of Comte have so prudently discarded.

"Dearest," he said, tenderly, "why not pray *to* the dead, instead of praying for them? Their immortality is in our hearts. A man must worship his mother, wife, and daughter. They are his guardian angels in life, and to them, should they die first, he prays. A father, husband, and son, are the same objects of tender worship to woman. Let there be no sad visions of future woe, for if there are rewards there must be punishments. Let it all be the tenderness and devotion of loving hearts, of the feeling that binds *us*, dearest."

Here Mademoiselle Mélanie opportunely came up, and pantheism and positivism, to Oliver's great relief, were dropped for the while, but for the while only. Antoinette Dorrien was at the time of life when the mind is most eager to solve the great problem which lies in wait for us all, as the sphinx of old lay in wait for her victims. Life and death are involved in the momentous riddles she utters. But is not every one of us an Œdipus? Do we ever doubt our wisdom when we rush on fate? Do we care for the bones of the victims which lie scattered on the cavern where broods that great iniquity, with the lovely face of woman to seduce, and the loathsome body of the serpent to crush those whom she ultimately devours?

Oliver, who was no fanatic of unbelief, would have been quite willing to let Antoinette's religion alone, so long as it did not interfere with her obedience to his wishes; but, when she forced these questions upon him, he was subtle enough to see that it might be well if he had a double hold upon her. Thus it was that she became his in soul as well as in heart. Twofold bondage, which implied much that Antoinette had never foreseen, and which made her weak

and helpless in her lover's hands, as a tool is in the hands of a skillful master.

She did not feel or even suspect this till Oliver had long been gone. She had been out one morning sketching, for she drew well, and especially with much fancy and taste, and she came in warm, flushed, and tired, but charmed with her morning's work.

"O aunt," she said, "it has been so delightful!"

"Have you finished the water-fall?" asked Mademoiselle Mélanie, sharply.

Antoinette blushed a little and hung her head. She had begun to draw a water-fall some time back, but had made no progress with her task. Once a goat perched on a rock had tempted her irresistibly. The water-fall could wait, but the goat certainly could not. Another time there was an effect of sunlight so beautiful but so fleeting, that it would have been a mortal pity not to catch it ere it faded away; and so she had been lured by one thing and by another, and the water-fall remained unfinished, with the outlines of its trees and rocks on the sky, and a blank where the foam of water should have been.

"No, I did not finish the water-fall," hesitatingly answered Antoinette. "The fact is, aunt, I found a group of ferns so lovely that it would have been a shame not to do them at once; and really, aunt, I think they are not amiss; and then there is plenty of time for the water-fall you know."

"Is there? We are going to Paris after to-morrow—to Mr. Dorrien's house. At least, *you* are," bitterly added Mademoiselle Mélanie. "He has written—here is his letter."

The sketch-book nearly fell from Antoinette's hands, her surprise was so great, but on surprise joy quickly followed.

"O aunt," she cried, "is it possible? Has Oliver already spoken to Mr. Dorrien?"

"There never was such a simpleton as that girl!" contemptuously exclaimed Mademoiselle Mélanie, and she curtly reminded her niece that Oliver not yet having returned to Paris, nothing was less likely than that he should have spoken to Mr. Dorrien.

"But then he will come back, aunt," said Antoinette, with gladness still in her eyes; "and, as he is one of the firm, why, I shall see him often, very often, and he will

speak to Mr. Dorrien in time, and Mr. Dorrien will give him a good position, and he will be all right again. Poor Oliver! You know, aunt, how badly his relations have used him. It seems there was a flaw in his father's marriage to his mother," continued Antoinette, looking at her aunt with great innocence, "and his cousin took advantage of it to rob him of his property. And he is so fond of the old house he was born in! He hopes to buy it back some day. To buy back one's own house—that is hard. I wish Mr. Dorrien would lend or give him the money."

Mademoiselle Mélanie laid her hand on the young girl's shoulder, and, looking in her face with a cold, hard look, she said:

"Remember that Mr. Dorrien is to know nothing of your engagement to Oliver."

"I know you made me promise that," answered Antoinette, with a blank face; "but now, aunt, how can it be? Why, I may see Oliver every day."

"What about it?"

"O aunt," exclaimed the young girl, with a frightened, deprecating look, "you know I am so stupid—I am, I really am," she said, almost, humbly. "I do not know how to tell a lie."

"You will learn!" laughed Mademoiselle Mélanie.

"No, no," cried Antoinette, alarmed, "I cannot; I can never learn that—I am too stupid."

"Rubbish!"

But Antoinette persisted that she was stupid, and could not do it.

"Well, then, do not," said her aunt, changing her tactics, for she knew of old that Antoinette could be obstinate, "do not tell a lie. Keep your counsel. Mr. Dorrien will never ask you if you are engaged to Oliver Black, and all you have to do is not to tell him."

"Oh, of course," cried Antoinette, brightening, "I can do that; besides," she added, with a happy smile, "Oliver will soon tell him all about it himself."

This difference was easily settled, but Joli proved the cause of one far more serious.

"You are not going to take that sparrow," authoritatively said Mademoiselle Mélanie, when they were packing, and she saw Antoinette settling the cage.

"Not take my little Joli?" cried Antoinette, indignantly. "Leave Joli behind—never!"

"I say you shall not take him."

"Aunt, I will. Nothing will make me forsake Joli."

"Say another word, and I will wring the little wretch's neck," cried Mademoiselle Mélanie, getting in one of her blind rages.

"And if you do, aunt," answered Antoinette, who was very white, "I will never see you again."

Mademoiselle Mélanie burst out laughing, and Joli, who was hopping about in his cage, chirruped at his little mistress.

Antoinette felt quite triumphant at her victory, and, in her good-humor, made no difficulty in acceding to various hints which her aunt gave concerning her guidance in Mr. Dorrien's house, until Oliver should have spoken to that gentleman. From a distance it all seemed very easy, and then Antoinette felt so sure that her lover would lose no time in making all right.

But the all right of youthful hope is very apt to turn into the all wrong of experience. Difficulties which she had not anticipated hemmed in Antoinette on every side. She very soon saw that discovery would ruin both Oliver and herself, and she kept their joint secret, not merely because she had promised to do so to her aunt, but because she could not help herself. She still hoped that her lover's return to Paris would be the end of her probation, but she soon lost that illusion. Only one thing was certain: however she might rebel, Oliver Black was her master. She felt it when they met again. She felt it when she was alone in her room on the evening of the day when she had gone to Versailles. Mrs. Reginald half suspected her; John had uttered a warning which had filled her with shame and fear. To pay Mademoiselle Mélanie a stolen, surreptitious visit, was to rush upon discovery, and what to a girl unused to deceit seemed perdition; but for all that Antoinette did not dare to disobey her lover. "If I do not do it," she thought, "he will do something dreadful, like the slipping of the note in my hand this evening, and he will be ruined, and all will be lost."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Mademoiselle Mélanie was making coffee with a little machine ingeniously constructed so as to tumble every five seconds, and thus either spill the water within, or extinguish the blue flame of the spirit without. The contrivance was one which would have tried any one's temper, and it drove Mademoiselle Mélanie half wild. Even when she had compelled this erratic machine into a sort of steadiness, she stood over it, giving the flickering blue flame a moody look, which became thoroughly scornful as it wandered to the poor furniture, faded paper hangings, and low ceilings of the room in which she was preparing her morning meal.

Mademoiselle Mélanie was a rebel at heart, and she carried on a perpetual and useless quarrel against Fate. Just now her lot was not a pleasant one, and retrospect seemed exceedingly bitter. How steady and sure had been the downward course of her life! A luxurious home in the tropics with her brother and her sister-in-law, a still comfortable home, though no longer luxurious, with her sister-in-law and her second husband, then Mr. Dorrien's house, not a home, but a very fair place to visit in, then the south of France and the ease of southern life, till that fatal Monaco brought restricted means and their bitterness, and now these dingy rooms on the third floor of an old house in the Marais!

Our heart makes our home. Many a brave spirit, trusting and hopeful, has been glad of the shelter of rooms as poor as these which Mademoiselle Mélanie now scorned; but where is the use of arguing against discontent? This woman would have found some fault with her lot if it had been cast in a palace, and her present position was certainly neither pleasant nor exhilarating.

"Why does she not come or write?" thought Mademoiselle Mélanie; "the little ungrateful viper, she leaves me by as soon as she can."

The thought was still passing through her mind, when a smart ring at the door seemed to answer it. Mademoiselle Mélanie went and opened it, and there, on the dark

landing, stood Antoinette, fresh as a rose, and smiling as the morning.

"O aunt, how are you?" she said, throwing her arms around Mademoiselle Mélanie's neck and kissing her. "Now please do not scold," she added, deprecatingly, "for I am so hungry, and I came out without waiting for breakfast."

This was touching the right chord. Mademoiselle Mélanie was too much of a woman not to like to feed the creature she loved after her own hard fashion; so she now allowed herself to be kissed, and she showed her niece in, and looked at her kindly enough.

"Why, I declare you are making coffee," cried Antoinette, in great glee. "Oh, the little darling machine! And see, aunt, I passed by a baker's, and bought the prettiest, and, I am sure, the most delicious little rolls you ever saw. If we only had a little fresh butter," she added, with a sigh of regret.

Mademoiselle Mélanie tried to remain grim and forbidding, but she could not. This girl, to whom she was almost always harsh, was her soft spot, after all, and then it was pretty, even in her severe eyes, to see Antoinette taking off her hat and gloves, and flitting about in her becoming attire, and with her graceful motions. It was pleasant to see how softly and neatly she brought forth all that was needful for the morning meal; how she seemed to know without being told where she was to find every thing she wanted.

"A clever little monkey!" thought Mademoiselle Mélanie. "Yes, a clever one indeed."

"And now it is all ready, aunt," said Antoinette, looking at the table with a critical yet satisfied air. "Shall we begin?"

They sat down, and, as she poured out the coffee, Antoinette, heaving a little sigh, said in a depressed tone:

"When did you see Oliver, aunt?"

"In La Ruya," dryly replied Mademoiselle Mélanie. "Why should I see him now? He does not want me any longer, does he?"

"Oh, pray do not be sarcastic, aunt," implored Antoinette. "Poor Oliver! He has put himself in a nice mess with all this. He wants to talk to us, I suppose, for he slipped a note into my hand last night bidding me tell you to take me to the Parc Monceaux this morning. I know the place,

it is one of the prettiest I ever saw, but so very, very far away, and we are to be there by ten o'clock, says Oliver."

"Then you would not have come but for that?" said Mademoiselle Mélanie.

"How could I?" answered Antoinette. "I did not dare to ask leave to come, lest I should be forbidden to do so, and you do not know what it is to be in that large house, and to feel like a poor little mouse, and every one like a great, great big cat watching you, and ready to pounce upon you."

She looked very doleful. Mademoiselle Mélanie's eyes sparkled. What was it? What did they do to her? How did they use her? They were unkind, she knew they were! And so, while they took their breakfast, she listened, with a dark and eager look, to the tale of Antoinette's wrongs. The coffee-machine had put Mademoiselle Mélanie in a bad temper, which she wanted to vent upon some one. Antoinette's blooming face had conjured the storm from herself, but it should light on some devoted head, and Mr. Dorrien and his whole household now came in for the benefit of the lady's displeasure. Antoinette heard her out, and took no exception to all her bitter comments, until John got his share, when she uttered a decisive protest.

"No, aunt, you are all wrong," said she. "John is very good and very kind to me, and I am also sure that he is true."

"Then you had better marry him!" disdainfully retorted Mademoiselle Mélanie, as she pushed away her empty cup, and stood up to change her dress previous to going out.

"I have no doubt it would be a very good thing for me, in every sense of the word, to marry John Dorrien," composedly replied Antoinette; "but I have a strong fancy that, even if I wished for such a thing, it would be of no use, and that John is much too good and too wise to have any thing to do with me."

Mademoiselle Mélanie stared in blank surprise, but Antoinette did not seem to think she had said any thing unusual, and drew on her gloves with perfect tranquillity.

"In what part of the garden is he to meet us?" asked Mademoiselle Mélanie.

"He did not say, aunt."

"Convenient!" was the dry answer. "I shall go to the Colonnade."

It is a long drive from the Marais to Monceaux, and it was long past ten when the two ladies alighted at the tall gilt gates which open into the beautiful green gardens. Mademoiselle Mélanie went at once to the Colonnade, and sat on a bench near it, but Antoinette felt restless, and said she must walk about awhile. She did not go far, but kept within the shadow of the gray columns which encircle the dark and still waters. Streaks of golden sunshine tipped the rich ivy wreathed round every stone shaft, and played on the surface of the little lake below; but gloom, soft, green, and deep, inclosed the spot. The air was fresh, and children and nurse-maids favored the more open spaces. Antoinette looked shyly round her, but there was no sign of Oliver. Perhaps he would not come, and that all her risk was vain. What would they think of her at La Maison Dorrien? How would it all end? A swan was sailing toward his home in a little islet in the lake. Antoinette paused to look at him, and, internally addressing him, she said:

"No one will ask you where you have been. Your house is your own, and—"

Here an arm was slipped within hers, and, looking round with a start, she saw the laughing face of Oliver Black bending toward her.

"I am late," he said—"so sorry, darling. But John Dorrien seemed to guess I was coming to you—he would not let me go."

"O Oliver," said Antoinette, with a frightened face, "I am afraid, I am, that he does guess!"

"What makes you think so?" asked Oliver, almost sharply.

"Any thing and every thing," she replied. "Oliver, must this last much longer?"

"If you mean our present position," he answered, coolly, "remember, dearest, that it has not lasted twenty-four hours yet."

"But I cannot bear it," she remonstrated—"I cannot indeed, Oliver. It makes me feel such a guilty thing!"

"My dear girl, you are not guilty—is not that enough?"

"But I do feel guilty," persisted Antoinette—"ever so

guilty; and, though you will not confess it, I am sure, Oliver, that so do you."

Oliver looked annoyed.

"My darling," he said, with just a touch of temper, "you ought to remember what I have already told you—there is no absolute right, no absolute wrong in any thing. Of course our position is unpleasant and awkward. It would be more agreeable to meet and talk in the old garden of La Maison Dorrien than to do so here. If you dislike concealment, you may be sure that it has no attractions for me; but the fault is not ours. John Dorrien is the best fellow in the world, but he has done, and is doing, all the mischief. He has accepted your inheritance, and he means to keep it. Of course he is willing to share it with you, but unluckily there is no such willingness on your side—*ergo*, John Dorrien must give way. I see no help for it. For my part I regret it—I always liked him since I saw him on board the steamer, the queerest little fellow. So far as I am concerned, I could get on elsewhere as well as at Mr. Dorrien's—better, perhaps. I must be fond of you, Antoinette, to tolerate this position."

She had heard him with downcast eyes; she now looked up again.

"Is it right?" she asked once more.

Oliver laughed at her persistency.

"But since there is no absolute right, no absolute wrong in any thing," he argued, "every man with an atom of sense knows that right and wrong are as inextricably mingled in human affairs as they are in human beings. Now look at John Dorrien, a good fellow, a sincere Christian, but one who clings to the goods of this world as much as you and I do, Antoinette. I do not blame him, I only state the fact. He will fight hard to keep his position, and we must fight hard to keep him out of it. He finds plenty of arguments on his side of the case, so do we on ours. The only question at stake is who shall win? That is the real right and wrong. Of course if he prevails he will give Providence the praise; and if he fails he will submit to its decrees; whereas, if I fail, I shall simply think that I committed some blunder; and, if I succeed, I shall call myself a clever fellow."

Antoinette gave him a wistful, perplexed look.

"John Dorrien is very religious, is he not?" she said, slowly.

"Yes, and Providence is one of his hobbies, poor dear John Dorrien! For my part I contend that a wise man's Providence is of his own fashioning. Let us take ourselves. We have been reared in comfort and ease. It is absurd to suppose that we should not suffer cruelly if we fell into real hard poverty. We owe it to ourselves not to allow such a catastrophe. Mind, I do not say that Providence owes it to us. I say we owe it to ourselves, and I for one am resolved to fight my way back to what I have lost. Look at yourself, my darling, look at your little soft hands" —he took up one as he spoke—"and tell me if they were made for the same work as Jeannette's poor red paws. It is monstrous to suppose that you should ever exchange places with that creature."

Antoinette laughed.

"Jeannette would not mind taking my place," said she.

"Well," coolly replied Oliver, "let her—if she can. But you see she cannot—she cannot become the well-born, pretty, refined girl you are. Can she, now?"

Antoinette smiled, for the voice of flattery is sweet to a girl's ear when it is that of the man she loves.

"Poor Jeannette," she said, "must she keep her red hands and be a drudge to the end?" Then suddenly, and with her eyes fixed on his face, "Oliver, what do you think John Dorrien would say on all this? I mean what would his opinions be?"

"My dearest, did we meet to discuss John Dorrien and his opinions? Now just sit down here, and let us talk of something else. Mr. Dorrien is very fond of you, of course; well—"

"Oh, no, Mr. Dorrien does not like me at all," interrupted Antoinette.

"Not like you?—impossible!"

"Indeed he does not. I really think he dislikes me."

Oliver looked incredulous and perplexed, but Antoinette, when he questioned her, which he did very closely, brought forward so many little proofs to strengthen her assertion, that he reluctantly admitted Mr. Dorrien was not a model grandpapa.

"You must improve him, darling," he said, gayly; "be, as you can if you only choose, winning and pretty. Surely," he added, glancing at her in pleased admiration—"surely you can coax a grandfather's heart."

"No," very decisively answered Antoinette. "There is something about Mr. Dorrien that keeps me at arm's-length. You will understand when you see us together. John has seen it, and he has told me that he will be my friend; for John is very kind, though I betray him."

"My dear child, there can be no betrayal where there is no trust; but by-the-by, what did you mean when you said that you feared John guessed something?"

He bent his eyes searchingly on her face. Antoinette looked ready to cry.

"I am very miserable," she said. "I do not remember John's exact words. Let me see—yes, he said yesterday, when we were at Versailles, that I had chosen an unsafe path, and I am afraid he must guess all about us."

Oliver smiled derisively.

"Impossible, my dear child!" he remarked, with gentle pity for her fears. "Why, John had not seen us together when he said that. No, no, depend upon it he meant something else; he always was fond of preaching, was John Dorrien; only we may just as well be on our guard, and not betray what he must not know—you understand, dearest?"

"Yes," despondently answered Antoinette, "I do understand. I am sure it is all wrong, and I am very, very miserable, for every word I hear about lies and treachery seems meant for me."

Oliver bit his lip, and looked both grave and perplexed. He was not troubled with conscientious scruples himself, and he was not prepared to find them in others; yet here were these weeds, for so he held them, springing up in most unwelcome soil, and how to uproot them he knew not. Argument seemed thrown away upon this girl, in whose power he had placed himself. His philosophy had evidently taken no deep root in her mind, and he sincerely regretted having tried its power upon her. He had opened the flood-gate of a passionate young soul, that would know, that would question, that would seek the truth, and he found it troublesome. Every human soul holds within it

self the faculties of doubt and belief. Oliver had given the preponderance to doubt; he really liked no law, human or divine, but human law he was too sensible to violate. He had keen passions; he was fond of money, of pleasure, of ease, but he would never have placed himself within the reach of judge or jury to gratify these tastes. If he had been a Christian, he would have had the same wholesome dread of Divine judgment, and never put it in the power of Heaven to find him out; but greatness and generosity were not in him, and he would have been careful not to do too much for the Almighty. The formula which he had chosen, that he would admit nothing which his reason did not sanction, was acceptable to his tastes and inclinations. It pledged him to nothing; his moral world remained free.

Reason, which burns with so pure a flame in fine minds, is a very dim sort of candle indeed in low ones. It never told this young man that he was to lay any restraint on his passions, save so far as his safety was concerned; then, indeed, it became clear, firm, and inexorable. Oliver had the greatest contempt for common rogues and vulgar villains: they were fools.

A man of this temperament could not be a zealot. He had no strong faith in his own opinions, and, having in him a touch of that poetry which feels what is graceful and becoming, he rather liked religion of a certain kind for women. He had as a boy read the lives of the saints, and remembered some very pretty legends in those old Bollandists. If Antoinette had been a believer in those relics of a mediæval past, he would have been loath to disturb her simple faith. It would have been so much easier to leave her to her gentle superstitions, as he condescendingly called those records of the great and the good. But this could not be. He found an inquiring soul and a blank page, or one on which very little had been written; that little he did his best to efface. He was no zealot, as we have already said, and if he had meddled with Antoinette's religion, such as it was, it was because he could not very well manage her without so doing. A girl who thinks about her soul is less liable to be a docile instrument in a man's hands than the girl who is not sure that she has got one; but Antoinette's natural integrity now suddenly in-

reviewed with these calculations, and gave him difficulties upon which he had not reckoned.

"My dear creature," he remarked, with a sort of candour in his look and tone, "what am I to say that will set your mind at ease? As soon as I can see my way clear, I will claim you openly; in the mean while we must stay as we are."

She looked at him, and he returned the look with a certain hardness in his gaze that quelled her. A kind of fear not of her position merely, but of Oliver Black himself, now crept round her heart for the first time. She had given herself a master, and she felt it.

"My darling," he said, very tenderly, "why will you not trust in me? Up to the present I have got on admirably with Mr. Dorrien. He actually tells me things he hides from John—on my word he does; and, what is more, it is none of my seeking. It all comes from himself. I really believe—I do—that, of his own accord, he will give up that absurd plan of fastening John to you, and that, without being unjust to dear John, who is the best and worthiest fellow in the world, he will be just to you. John is quite right in thinking that he deserves something handsome from La Maison Dorrien. He does. Let him have it; but let him not have you, my treasure. Be only patient a little while—a very little while—and I shall make all right, depend upon it."

He smiled so kindly, he spoke so confidently, that fear left Antoinette, and trust came back, as if by magic.

"Oh! yes," she warmly cried, "I know you will—I am sure of it."

"Of course I will," he returned, cheerfully, pleased, spite his cynicism, to meet the fond, confiding look of her soft, dark eyes. "It will be all so easy, if you will only let me manage."

To trust in the man she loves, to lean upon him, is a woman's irresistible impulse. Most willingly did Antoinette now throw her burden upon Oliver. Of course he would manage all. What ailed her that she had not seen that? And of course, too, he meant well and kindly to John. What ailed her that she had not seen that too? And so she listened to his plausible speech, and held it a very gospel; and all that had frightened her pride or

alarmed her conscience seemed to vanish as baleful mists fade away in the morning sun.

"And now," said Oliver, well pleased at the result of his eloquence—"now let us settle about our little interviews and our letters. Your aunt will be invaluable in that respect."

"Will she?"

So spoke Mademoiselle Mélanie, who now stood before the pair, pale with anger at their long forgetfulness of her existence. Antoinette gave a guilty start, and blushed crimson; but Oliver only laughed gayly in the irate lady's face.

"Of course she will," he resumed, in a light tone. "What should we do—what should we ever have done," he pointedly added, "without that kind aunt?"

Antoinette gave him a frightened look; she thought his audacity so great in thus addressing Mademoiselle Mélanie. But the event justified his daring: the lady tightened her lips, and looked above the two heads of the lovers as they sat on the wooden bench, and, smiling after a lofty fashion of her own, said it was a fine day.

"Yes, but I must go," hesitatingly remarked Antoinette, looking at Oliver as if fearful lest he should detain her.

He had no such inclination. He did not mean to linger long over this affair; but he was not prepared for immediate detection, and he really thought that Antionette had been out too long already.

"This is how you must account for your absence," he said, rising, and taking her arm—"you must say that you went to see your aunt, but of course you have already said that."

"No, I said nothing."

Oliver looked vexed.

"My dear creature, how could you be so imprudent? Why, you must have been missed, and—"

"Oh! I left word that I should not be in for breakfast."

"Very silly, very imprudent," remarked Oliver, looking more and more amazed. "There was no need for it, moreover. However, the mischief is done, and all you have to do now is to mend it as best you can. Say that you

went to see your aunt, and have breakfast with her, and that she took you out driving, and brought you here. That will account for your long absence—besides, the nearer truth one keeps, the better it always is."

Antoinette heard him abashed, and answered not one word. She felt humbled and ashamed at the part she was acting; mortified, too, at having the very words she was to speak dictated to her; and yet she saw no help for it, and she was honest enough to confess to herself that, even if Oliver had not suggested this explanation of her absence, she could have given none other.

"Mademoiselle Mélanie and I," continued Oliver, "will settle all about our future meetings. I have no time to do so now with you—besides, it will require consideration."

The real truth was, that Oliver had no plan at all, and did not care to have one. He was no subtle plotter, laying deep schemes, but a bold gambler, ready to seize on chances, and, if need were, to make them. Brief as had been this morning's interview with Antoinette, he felt that it had lasted long enough, and he shrewdly guessed that the less the young girl knew about his plans and views the better it would be for his cause. It is rare, indeed, when the serpent does not come between the Adams and Eves of this world, and sow discord where there should be love, and between these two he was coming early and fast.

"I dare not drive home with you," said Oliver, with a sigh, as he handed Antoinette and her aunt into a little open carriage which he hailed for them; "but I shall see you this evening, I hope. Good-by, darling."

And thus they parted; and Antoinette looked wistfully after her lover, and wondered at this brief interview, which she had come so far to seek.

"Well," impatiently said Mademoiselle Mélanie, "what comes next? What have you both decided upon? When is that John Dorrien to walk out?"

Her eyes sparkled at the thought. Antoinette was startled, and replied with a half-frightened air:

"We have decided upon nothing, aunt. Besides, I leave it all to Oliver."

"Then you are a simpleton," sharply answered her aunt, tightening her lips. "What is he?—nothing; and you are all, remember that."

"I am very little, aunt," replied Antoinette, somewhat sadly—"indeed, I think, sometimes, that I am nothing at all."

She never thought so more than when the carriage drove her to the door of the Hôtel Dorrien, and she found herself face to face with her grandfather on alighting at the old gates. He raised his hat with frigid courtesy to Mademoiselle Mélanie, who all but laughed with triumph in her face, and, taking his granddaughter's arm, he led her across the court to the house.

"You have been out with that lady, I presume?" he said, as they walked up the *perron*.

"Yes," answered Antoinette, trying to look unconcerned, "I have."

"Then I beg that you will do so no more. Indeed, I expect that you will hold no intercourse with Mademoiselle —I forget her name.—Brénu," addressing a porter who was passing by, "is Monsieur John in the storeroom? Yes. Well, then, tell him, please, that I beg he will let me see those papers.—As I was saying, my dear," resumed Mr. Dorrien, turning to Antoinette, "I expect you will hold no intercourse with that lady while you are under my roof. I should object to it."

He spoke with no appearance of anger, but his careless coldness was all the more mortifying. Of this, too, he seemed unaware; and the "good-morning, my dear," with which he parted from Antoinette as they had ascended the *perron*, and he entered his own rooms and left her at the foot of the staircase, was essentially urbane and gentlemanlike in its coldness.

CHAPTER XXX.

SMALL slights sting the young very sharply. That armor which we all must don if we would pass scathless through life, and which grows so hard, and encases us so well that in the end only the keenest weapon can pierce it, and inflict a wound, is very weak and thin in our youth.

Then blame is not to be endured, a word of reproof is an insult, indifference is unutterable mortification. Alas! of all things, that is the one we can least understand. We are so much to ourselves, and it seems so strange that we should be so little to others.

When the door of his room closed on Mr. Dorrien, Antoinette stood as he had left her, shame and mortification struggling in her heart, and in the meaning of her expressive face. She had not rallied from either feeling when she heard a light foot spring up the steps of the *perron* behind, and, turning round hastily, she saw John Dorrien, with some papers in his hand. A flush of glad surprise passed across his features as he saw Antoinette. The young girl's escapade had been the subject of Mrs. Reginald's comments, not loud, but deep, at the breakfast-table.

"That little thing will come to grief," had said Mrs. Reginald, shaking her head ominously; "and it is a pity, because she is a nice little thing, spite her nonsense."

"She must have been very badly reared," remarked Mrs. Dorrien, indignation proving stronger than her wish to make the best of Antoinette to her son. "I am sure," she feelingly added, "that Mademoiselle Basnage would not have behaved so."

John, though silent, had had his own thoughts. His prevailing fear had been lest Antoinette's ignorance of Paris and its ways should have led her into some danger. His first feeling on seeing her safe again was one of relief, but, quickly reading the meaning of her troubled countenance, he exclaimed:

"What ails you, Antoinette? Have you met with any unpleasantness?"

"Oh! no," answered Antoinette, turning her head away, that he might not see the tears in her eyes, "my unpleasantness is not out, but in. John, I wish I had never entered this house."

John Dorrien looked both sorry and perplexed. He took her hand, and, gently leading her through the glass door that opened on the garden, he said, kindly, as he walked by her side:

"Perhaps I can help, perhaps I can advise. Take a turn with me, and tell me all about it."

He spoke so kindly, he looked so concerned, that An-

toinette's heart opened to him—so far, at least, as it could. So, letting him lead her to the stone bench by the river-god, she sat down there and told him her trouble. Why did Mr. Dorrien treat her so? Why was he so unkind, not to say despotic, as to forbid her holding any intercourse with her aunt?

"But she is not your aunt," objected John, gently.

"What matter? I have always called her aunt."

"Yes, it seems hard," he soothingly replied; "but remember that, while you are under Mr. Dorrien's care and guardianship, you must obey his wishes, even in this."

"Why so?" she asked, indignantly. "It is so unjust. If there be any thing wrong about aunt, why did he leave me with her when my poor mother died?"

"Mr. Dorrien did not know of Mrs. George Dorrien's death till I told him of it," answered John, quickly.

Antoinette's look of surprise made him aware of his self-betrayal. He colored deeply, then, laughing a little, to cover his embarrassment, said, "I was in the south this year, and thus learned the truth, which, for some purpose of her own, Mademoiselle Mélanie had concealed."

He tried to speak with seeming unconcern, but he was not successful. Antoinette darted a quick look at him, and read the story of the past in his face. In a moment she guessed it all. He was the stranger whose questions concerning herself and her mother, when repeated in part by Madame Brun, had long perplexed her, until her girlish fancy had identified him with Oliver Black. The young man's laughing denial had only confirmed her belief. "How could I be so foolish?" she now swiftly thought. "Did not Madame Brun say that young man had curly brown hair, and is not Oliver's hair dark and silky? Of course it was John!"

Yes, of course it was John, and so she had been brought to this house not because Mr. Dorrien's heart yearned toward his son's child, after his long forgetfulness, but because Mr. Dorrien's young cousin had willed it so. Her heart beat with involuntary emotions, her brow crimsoned with a sudden shame, as, for the first time, she guessed that, in some sort, John cared for her. She rose, he rose too, and so they stood face to face, both silent, both embarrassed and troubled, till Mr. Dorrien suddenly came up to them,

and, giving them any thing but a pleased look, said, with marked emphasis:

"You seem to have forgotten, John, that I am waiting. I suppose those are the papers in your hand?"

"They are, sir, and I beg your pardon. I came out here with Miss Dorrien, and—"

"Yes, yes, so I see; but Miss Dorrien will have the goodness to wait awhile. I particularly want to go out this morning—if one can call twelve o'clock early," added Mr. Dorrien, looking at his watch.

Antoinette, without saying a word, or giving either Mr. Dorrien or John a look, walked away toward the house.

She had scarcely reached her room when the luncheon-bell rang. She would gladly have remained where she was, but did not dare to do so. Mrs. Dorrien and Mrs. Reginald only were present. Mr. Dorrien and John were engaged, said Mrs. Dorrien, with a look of mystery and consequence that implied—"I know something, and you do not."

"You made us very anxious this morning, my dear," said Mrs. Reginald to Antoinette; and with this brief remark she dismissed the matter of the young girl's delinquency.

Mrs. Dorrien was not so easily pacified. She was a mother, and touchy, as most mothers are. A mother's instinct also told her that her son had undergone some wrong at Antoinette's hands, and she felt affronted. That Antoinette should not appreciate John was simply monstrous! She lost no time in showing the young lady her mistake.

"I wish Monsieur Basnage would bring his daughter to town this winter," she said, addressing Mrs. Reginald across the table, and ignoring Antoinette utterly.

"Do you?" replied Mrs. Reginald, opening her eyes wide. "Why so."

"I want to see her again," said Mrs. Dorrien, with a nod and a smile; "I take a particular interest in that young lady."

"Well, I cannot say that I do," composedly remarked Mrs. Reginald. "Monsieur Basnage is no favorite of mine, and, if his daughter is like him, she—"

"Oh! she is charming!" Mrs. Dorrien hastened to interrupt—"a charming girl; accomplished—reared in a convent—"

"A doll!" interrupted Mrs. Reginald, who was in one of her obstinate, fractious moods. "All girls reared after a pattern are dolls, as a matter of course; and French girls are the most dolly girls I ever saw," added Mrs. Reginald, fastening her obstinate brown eye on Mrs. Dorrien.

"Well, well," said the lady, giving up the argument in despair, but smiling good-humoredly as she did so, "I suspect, dear, that neither are you nor am I a fair judge of this matter. Now, John's opinion of Mademoiselle Basnage would be worth something."

"And what do boys know about girls?" asked the indomitable Mrs. Reginald. "Nothing, or worse than nothing. Bless you, the more dolly they are, the better they like them," she added somewhat bitterly, as she remembered that it was for a doll of the worst kind that she had been betrayed and forsaken.

"Well, Mr. Dorrien is no boy," persisted Mrs. Dorrien, who was bent on impressing the silent and apparently indifferent Antoinette with a sense of the unknown Mademoiselle Basnage's merits, "and he says that Mademoiselle Basnage is charming."

John's entrance put an end to the argument. He hurried over his meal, scarcely spoke, never looked at Antoinette, and left, with an apology, before the repast was fairly ended.

"Poor John!" sighed Mrs. Dorrien; "he has a hard life of it."

"My dear, he likes it," said Mrs. Reginald, kindly; "depend upon it, too, that it has saved him from much mischief. Why, good for little though his friend Mr. Black, for instance, is, yet you may be sure that, if he had worked as hard as our John has, he would not be such a pitiful little fellow as he is."

It required all Antoinette's self-control not to break out on hearing this uncalled-for attack; but what right had she to speak, to take the part of Oliver, or utter even a protest in his behalf? Burning with silent and useless indignation, she rose from the table as soon as she could decently do so, and retired to her own room.

Her thoughts there were not pleasant, and were as varied, though not so bright, as the colors of the rainbow. With a girl's rapid intuition, she guessed that she had

"You must improve him, darling," he said, gayly; "be, as you can if you only choose, winning and pretty. Surely," he added, glancing at her in pleased admiration—"surely you can coax a grandfather's heart."

"No," very decisively answered Antoinette. "There is something about Mr. Dorrien that keeps me at arm's-length. You will understand when you see us together. John has seen it, and he has told me that he will be my friend; for John is very kind, though I betray him."

"My dear child, there can be no betrayal where there is no trust; but by-the-by, what did you mean when you said that you feared John guessed something?"

He bent his eyes searchingly on her face. Antoinette looked ready to cry.

"I am very miserable," she said. "I do not remember John's exact words. Let me see—yes, he said yesterday, when we were at Versailles, that I had chosen an unsafe path, and I am afraid he must guess all about us."

Oliver smiled derisively.

"Impossible, my dear child!" he remarked, with gentle pity for her fears. "Why, John had not seen us together when he said that. No, no, depend upon it he meant something else; he always was fond of preaching, was John Dorrien; only we may just as well be on our guard, and not betray what he must not know—you understand, dearest?"

"Yes," despondently answered Antoinette, "I do understand. I am sure it is all wrong, and I am very, very miserable, for every word I hear about lies and treachery seems meant for me."

Oliver bit his lip, and looked both grave and perplexed. He was not troubled with conscientious scruples himself, and he was not prepared to find them in others; yet here were these weeds, for so he held them, springing up in most unwelcome soil, and how to uproot them he knew not. Argument seemed thrown away upon this girl, in whose power he had placed himself. His philosophy had evidently taken no deep root in her mind, and he sincerely regretted having tried its power upon her. He had opened the flood-gate of a passionate young soul, that would know, that would question, that would seek the truth, and he found it troublesome. Every human soul holds within it

self the faculties of doubt and belief. Oliver had given the preponderance to doubt; he really liked no law, human or divine, but human law he was too sensible to violate. He had keen passions; he was fond of money, of pleasure, of ease, but he would never have placed himself within the reach of judge or jury to gratify these tastes. If he had been a Christian, he would have had the same wholesome dread of Divine judgment, and never put it in the power of Heaven to find him out; but greatness and generosity were not in him, and he would have been careful not to do too much for the Almighty. The formula which he had chosen, that he would admit nothing which his reason did not sanction, was acceptable to his tastes and inclinations. It pledged him to nothing; his moral world remained free.

Reason, which burns with so pure a flame in fine minds, is a very dim sort of candle indeed in low ones. It never told this young man that he was to lay any restraint on his passions, save so far as his safety was concerned; then, indeed, it became clear, firm, and inexorable. Oliver had the greatest contempt for common rogues and vulgar villains: they were fools.

A man of this temperament could not be a zealot. He had no strong faith in his own opinions, and, having in him a touch of that poetry which feels what is graceful and becoming, he rather liked religion of a certain kind for women. He had as a boy read the lives of the saints, and remembered some very pretty legends in those old Bollandists. If Antoinette had been a believer in those relics of a mediæval past, he would have been loath to disturb her simple faith. It would have been so much easier to leave her to her gentle superstitions, as he condescendingly called those records of the great and the good. But this could not be. He found an inquiring soul and a blank page, or one on which very little had been written; that little he did his best to efface. He was no zealot, as we have already said, and if he had meddled with Antoinette's religion, such as it was, it was because he could not very well manage her without so doing. A girl who thinks about her soul is less liable to be a docile instrument in a man's hands than the girl who is not sure that she has got one; but Antoinette's natural integrity now suddenly in-

guilty; and, though you will not confess it, I am sure, Oliver, that so do you."

Oliver looked annoyed.

"My darling," he said, with just a touch of temper, "you ought to remember what I have already told you—there is no absolute right, no absolute wrong in any thing. Of course our position is unpleasant and awkward. It would be more agreeable to meet and talk in the old garden of La Maison Dorrien than to do so here. If you dislike concealment, you may be sure that it has no attractions for me; but the fault is not ours. John Dorrien is the best fellow in the world, but he has done, and is doing, all the mischief. He has accepted your inheritance, and he means to keep it. Of course he is willing to share it with you, but unluckily there is no such willingness on your side—*ergo*, John Dorrien must give way. I see no help for it. For my part I regret it—I always liked him since I saw him on board the steamer, the queerest little fellow. So far as I am concerned, I could get on elsewhere as well as at Mr. Dorrien's—better, perhaps. I must be fond of you, Antoinette, to tolerate this position."

She had heard him with downcast eyes; she now looked up again.

"Is it right?" she asked once more.

Oliver laughed at her persistency.

"But since there is no absolute right, no absolute wrong in any thing," he argued, "every man with an atom of sense knows that right and wrong are as inextricably mingled in human affairs as they are in human beings. Now look at John Dorrien, a good fellow, a sincere Christian, but one who clings to the goods of this world as much as you and I do, Antoinette. I do not blame him, I only state the fact. He will fight hard to keep his position, and we must fight hard to keep him out of it. He finds plenty of arguments on his side of the case, so do we on ours. The only question at stake is who shall win? That is the real right and wrong. Of course if he prevails he will give Providence the praise; and if he fails he will submit to its decrees; whereas, if I fail, I shall simply think that I committed some blunder; and, if I succeed, I shall call myself a clever fellow."

Antoinette gave him a wistful, perplexed look.

"John Dorrien is very religious, is he not?" she said, slowly.

"Yes, and Providence is one of his hobbies, poor dear John Dorrien! For my part I contend that a wise man's Providence is of his own fashioning. Let us take ourselves. We have been reared in comfort and ease. It is absurd to suppose that we should not suffer cruelly if we fell into real hard poverty. We owe it to ourselves not to allow such a catastrophe. Mind, I do not say that Providence owes it to us. I say we owe it to ourselves, and I for one am resolved to fight my way back to what I have lost. Look at yourself, my darling, look at your little soft hands" —he took up one as he spoke—"and tell me if they were made for the same work as Jeannette's poor red paws. It is monstrous to suppose that you should ever exchange places with that creature."

Antoinette laughed.

"Jeannette would not mind taking my place," said she.

"Well," coolly replied Oliver, "let her—if she can. But you see she cannot—she cannot become the well-born, pretty, refined girl you are. Can she, now?"

Antoinette smiled, for the voice of flattery is sweet to a girl's ear when it is that of the man she loves.

"Poor Jeannette," she said, "must she keep her red hands and be a drudge to the end?" Then suddenly, and with her eyes fixed on his face, "Oliver, what do you think John Dorrien would say on all this? I mean what would his opinions be?"

"My dearest, did we meet to discuss John Dorrien and his opinions? Now just sit down here, and let us talk of something else. Mr. Dorrien is very fond of you, of course; well—"

"Oh, no, Mr. Dorrien does not like me at all," interrupted Antoinette.

"Not like you?—impossible!"

"Indeed he does not. I really think he dislikes me."

Oliver looked incredulous and perplexed, but Antoinette, when he questioned her, which he did very closely, brought forward so many little proofs to strengthen her assertion, that he reluctantly admitted Mr. Dorrien was not a model grandpapa.

"You must improve him, darling," he said, gayly; "be, as you can if you only choose, winning and pretty. Surely," he added, glancing at her in pleased admiration—"surely you can coax a grandfather's heart."

"No," very decisively answered Antoinette. "There is something about Mr. Dorrien that keeps me at arm's-length. You will understand when you see us together. John has seen it, and he has told me that he will be my friend; for John is very kind, though I betray him."

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terfered with these calculations, and gave him difficulties upon which he had not reckoned.

"My dear creature," he remarked, with a sort of candor in his look and tone, "what am I to say that will set your mind at ease? As soon as I can see my way clear, I will claim you openly; in the mean while we must stay as we are."

She looked at him, and he returned the look with a certain hardness in his gaze that quelled her. A kind of fear not of her position merely, but of Oliver Black himself, now crept round her heart for the first time. She had given herself a master, and she felt it.

"My darling," he said, very tenderly, "why will you not trust in me? Up to the present I have got on admirably with Mr. Dorrien. He actually tells me things he hides from John—on my word he does; and, what is more, it is none of my seeking. It all comes from himself. I really believe—I do—that, of his own accord, he will give up that absurd plan of fastening John to you, and that, without being unjust to dear John, who is the best and worthiest fellow in the world, he will be just to you. John is quite right in thinking that he deserves something handsome from La Maison Dorrien. He does. Let him have it; but let him not have you, my treasure. Be only patient a little while—a very little while—and I shall make all right, depend upon it."

He smiled so kindly, he spoke so confidently, that fear left Antoinette, and trust came back, as if by magic.

"Oh! yes," she warmly cried, "I know you will—I am sure of it."

"Of course I will," he returned, cheerfully, pleased, spite his cynicism, to meet the fond, confiding look of her soft, dark eyes. "It will be all so easy, if you will only let me manage."

To trust in the man she loves, to lean upon him, is a woman's irresistible impulse. Most willingly did Antoinette now throw her burden upon Oliver. Of course he would manage all. What ailed her that she had not seen that? And of course, too, he meant well and kindly to John. What ailed her that she had not seen that too? And so she listened to his plausible speech, and held it a very gospel; and all that had frightened her pride or

alarmed her conscience seemed to vanish as baleful mists fade away in the morning sun.

"And now," said Oliver, well pleased at the result of his eloquence—"now let us settle about our little interviews and our letters. Your aunt will be invaluable in that respect."

"Will she?"

So spoke Mademoiselle Mélanie, who now stood before the pair, pale with anger at their long forgetfulness of her existence. Antoinette gave a guilty start, and blushed crimson; but Oliver only laughed gayly in the irate lady's face.

"Of course she will," he resumed, in a light tone. "What should we do—what should we ever have done," he pointedly added, "without that kind aunt?"

Antoinette gave him a frightened look; she thought his audacity so great in thus addressing Mademoiselle Mélanie. But the event justified his daring: the lady tightened her lips, and looked above the two heads of the lovers as they sat on the wooden bench, and, smiling after a lofty fashion of her own, said it was a fine day.

"Yes, but I must go," hesitatingly remarked Antoinette, looking at Oliver as if fearful lest he should detain her.

He had no such inclination. He did not mean to linger long over this affair; but he was not prepared for immediate detection, and he really thought that Antionette had been out too long already.

"This is how you must account for your absence," he said, rising, and taking her arm—"you must say that you went to see your aunt, but of course you have already said that."

"No, I said nothing."

Oliver looked vexed.

"My dear creature, how could you be so imprudent? Why, you must have been missed, and—"

"Oh! I left word that I should not be in for breakfast."

"Very silly, very imprudent," remarked Oliver, looking more and more amazed. "There was no need for it, moreover. However, the mischief is done, and all you have to do now is to mend it as best you can. Say that you

went to see your aunt, and have breakfast with her, and that she took you out driving, and brought you here. That will account for your long absence—besides, the nearer truth one keeps, the better it always is."

Antoinette heard him abashed, and answered not one word. She felt humbled and ashamed at the part she was acting; mortified, too, at having the very words she was to speak dictated to her; and yet she saw no help for it, and she was honest enough to confess to herself that, even if Oliver had not suggested this explanation of her absence, she could have given none other.

"Mademoiselle Mélanie and I," continued Oliver, "will settle all about our future meetings. I have no time to do so now with you—besides, it will require consideration."

The real truth was, that Oliver had no plan at all, and did not care to have one. He was no subtle plotter, laying deep schemes, but a bold gambler, ready to seize on chances, and, if need were, to make them. Brief as had been this morning's interview with Antoinette, he felt that it had lasted long enough, and he shrewdly guessed that the less the young girl knew about his plans and views the better it would be for his cause. It is rare, indeed, when the serpent does not come between the Adams and Eves of this world, and sow discord where there should be love, and between these two he was coming early and fast.

"I dare not drive home with you," said Oliver, with a sigh, as he handed Antoinette and her aunt into a little open carriage which he hailed for them; "but I shall see you this evening, I hope. Good-by, darling."

And thus they parted; and Antoinette looked wistfully after her lover, and wondered at this brief interview, which she had come so far to seek.

"Well," impatiently said Mademoiselle Mélanie, "what comes next? What have you both decided upon? When is that John Dorrien to walk out?"

Her eyes sparkled at the thought. Antoinette was startled, and replied with a half-frightened air:

"We have decided upon nothing, aunt. Besides, I leave it all to Oliver."

"Then you are a simpleton," sharply answered her aunt, tightening her lips. "What is he?—nothing; and you are all, remember that."

"I am very little, aunt," replied Antoinette, somewhat sadly—"indeed, I think, sometimes, that I am nothing at all."

She never thought so more than when the carriage drove her to the door of the Hôtel Dorrien, and she found herself face to face with her grandfather on alighting at the old gates. He raised his hat with frigid courtesy to Mademoiselle Mélanie, who all but laughed with triumph in her face, and, taking his granddaughter's arm, he led her across the court to the house.

"You have been out with that lady, I presume?" he said, as they walked up the *perron*.

"Yes," answered Antoinette, trying to look unconcerned, "I have."

"Then I beg that you will do so no more. Indeed, I expect that you will hold no intercourse with Mademoiselle —I forget her name.—Brénu," addressing a porter who was passing by, "is Monsieur John in the storeroom? Yes. Well, then, tell him, please, that I beg he will let me see those papers.—As I was saying, my dear," resumed Mr. Dorrien, turning to Antoinette, "I expect you will hold no intercourse with that lady while you are under my roof. I should object to it."

He spoke with no appearance of anger, but his careless coldness was all the more mortifying. Of this, too, he seemed unaware; and the "good-morning, my dear," with which he parted from Antoinette as they had ascended the *perron*, and he entered his own rooms and left her at the foot of the staircase, was essentially urbane and gentlemanlike in its coldness.

CHAPTER XXX.

SMALL slights sting the young very sharply. That armor which we all must don if we would pass scathless through life, and which grows so hard, and encases us so well that in the end only the keenest weapon can pierce it, and inflict a wound, is very weak and thin in our youth.

Then blame is not to be endured, a word of reproof is an insult, indifference is unutterable mortification. Alas! of all things, that is the one we can least understand. We are so much to ourselves, and it seems so strange that we should be so little to others.

When the door of his room closed on Mr. Dorrien, Antoinette stood as he had left her, shame and mortification struggling in her heart, and in the meaning of her expressive face. She had not rallied from either feeling when she heard a light foot spring up the steps of the *perron* behind, and, turning round hastily, she saw John Dorrien, with some papers in his hand. A flush of glad surprise passed across his features as he saw Antoinette. The young girl's escapade had been the subject of Mrs. Reginald's comments, not loud, but deep, at the breakfast-table.

"That little thing will come to grief," had said Mrs. Reginald, shaking her head ominously; "and it is a pity, because she is a nice little thing, spite her nonsense."

"She must have been very badly reared," remarked Mrs. Dorrien, indignation proving stronger than her wish to make the best of Antoinette to her son. "I am sure," she feelingly added, "that Mademoiselle Basnage would not have behaved so."

John, though silent, had had his own thoughts. His prevailing fear had been lest Antoinette's ignorance of Paris and its ways should have led her into some danger. His first feeling on seeing her safe again was one of relief, but, quickly reading the meaning of her troubled countenance, he exclaimed:

"What ails you, Antoinette? Have you met with any unpleasantness?"

"Oh! no," answered Antoinette, turning her head away, that he might not see the tears in her eyes, "my unpleasantness is not out, but in. John, I wish I had never entered this house."

John Dorrien looked both sorry and perplexed. He took her hand, and, gently leading her through the glass door that opened on the garden, he said, kindly, as he walked by her side:

"Perhaps I can help, perhaps I can advise. Take a turn with me, and tell me all about it."

He spoke so kindly, he looked so concerned, that An-

toinette's heart opened to him—so far, at least, as it could. So, letting him lead her to the stone bench by the river-god, she sat down there and told him her trouble. Why did Mr. Dorrien treat her so? Why was he so unkind, not to say despotic, as to forbid her holding any intercourse with her aunt?

"But she is not your aunt," objected John, gently.

"What matter? I have always called her aunt."

"Yes, it seems hard," he soothingly replied; "but remember that, while you are under Mr. Dorrien's care and guardianship, you must obey his wishes, even in this."

"Why so?" she asked, indignantly. "It is so unjust. If there be any thing wrong about aunt, why did he leave me with her when my poor mother died?"

"Mr. Dorrien did not know of Mrs. George Dorrien's death till I told him of it," answered John, quickly.

Antoinette's look of surprise made him aware of his self-betrayal. He colored deeply, then, laughing a little, to cover his embarrassment, said, "I was in the south this year, and thus learned the truth, which, for some purpose of her own, Mademoiselle Mélanie had concealed."

He tried to speak with seeming unconcern, but he was not successful. Antoinette darted a quick look at him, and read the story of the past in his face. In a moment she guessed it all. He was the stranger whose questions concerning herself and her mother, when repeated in part by Madame Brun, had long perplexed her, until her girlish fancy had identified him with Oliver Black. The young man's laughing denial had only confirmed her belief. "How could I be so foolish?" she now swiftly thought. "Did not Madame Brun say that young man had curly brown hair, and is not Oliver's hair dark and silky? Of course it was John!"

Yes, of course it was John, and so she had been brought to this house not because Mr. Dorrien's heart yearned toward his son's child, after his long forgetfulness, but because Mr. Dorrien's young cousin had willed it so. Her heart beat with involuntary emotions, her brow crimsoned with a sudden shame, as, for the first time, she guessed that, in some sort, John cared for her. She rose, he rose too, and so they stood face to face, both silent, both embarrassed and troubled, till Mr. Dorrien suddenly came up to them,

guilty; and, though you will not confess it, I am sure, Oliver, that so do you."

Oliver looked annoyed.

"My darling," he said, with just a touch of temper, "you ought to remember what I have already told you—there is no absolute right, no absolute wrong in any thing. Of course our position is unpleasant and awkward. It would be more agreeable to meet and talk in the old garden of La Maison Dorrien than to do so here. If you dislike concealment, you may be sure that it has no attractions for me; but the fault is not ours. John Dorrien is the best fellow in the world, but he has done, and is doing, all the mischief. He has accepted your inheritance, and he means to keep it. Of course he is willing to share it with you, but unluckily there is no such willingness on your side—*ergo*, John Dorrien must give way. I see no help for it. For my part I regret it—I always liked him since I saw him on board the steamer, the queerest little fellow. So far as I am concerned, I could get on elsewhere as well as at Mr. Dorrien's—better, perhaps. I must be fond of you, Antoinette, to tolerate this position."

She had heard him with downcast eyes; she now looked up again.

"Is it right?" she asked once more.

Oliver laughed at her persistency.

"But since there is no absolute right, no absolute wrong in any thing," he argued, "every man with an atom of sense knows that right and wrong are as inextricably mingled in human affairs as they are in human beings. Now look at John Dorrien, a good fellow, a sincere Christian, but one who clings to the goods of this world as much as you and I do, Antoinette. I do not blame him, I only state the fact. He will fight hard to keep his position, and we must fight hard to keep him out of it. He finds plenty of arguments on his side of the case, so do we on ours. The only question at stake is who shall win? That is the real right and wrong. Of course if he prevails he will give Providence the praise; and if he fails he will submit to its decrees; whereas, if I fail, I shall simply think that I committed some blunder; and, if I succeed, I shall call myself a clever fellow."

Antoinette gave him a wistful, perplexed look.

"John Dorrien is very religious, is he not?" she said, slowly.

"Yes, and Providence is one of his hobbies, poor dear John Dorrien! For my part I contend that a wise man's Providence is of his own fashioning. Let us take ourselves. We have been reared in comfort and ease. It is absurd to suppose that we should not suffer cruelly if we fell into real hard poverty. We owe it to ourselves not to allow such a catastrophe. Mind, I do not say that Providence owes it to us. I say we owe it to ourselves, and I for one am resolved to fight my way back to what I have lost. Look at yourself, my darling, look at your little soft hands" —he took up one as he spoke—"and tell me if they were made for the same work as Jeannette's poor red paws. It is monstrous to suppose that you should ever exchange places with that creature."

Antoinette laughed.

"Jeannette would not mind taking my place," said she.

"Well," coolly replied Oliver, "let her—if she can. But you see she cannot—she cannot become the well-born, pretty, refined girl you are. Can she, now?"

Antoinette smiled, for the voice of flattery is sweet to a girl's ear when it is that of the man she loves.

"Poor Jeannette," she said, "must she keep her red hands and be a drudge to the end?" Then suddenly, and with her eyes fixed on his face, "Oliver, what do you think John Dorrien would say on all this? I mean what would his opinions be?"

"My dearest, did we meet to discuss John Dorrien and his opinions? Now just sit down here, and let us talk of something else. Mr. Dorrien is very fond of you, of course; well—"

"Oh, no, Mr. Dorrien does not like me at all," interrupted Antoinette.

"Not like you?—impossible!"

"Indeed he does not. I really think he dislikes me."

Oliver looked incredulous and perplexed, but Antoinette, when he questioned her, which he did very closely, brought forward so many little proofs to strengthen her assertion, that he reluctantly admitted Mr. Dorrien was not a model grandpapa.

"You must improve him, darling," he said, gayly; "be, as you can if you only choose, winning and pretty. Surely," he added, glancing at her in pleased admiration—"surely you can coax a grandfather's heart."

"No," very decisively answered Antoinette. "There is something about Mr. Dorrien that keeps me at arm's-length. You will understand when you see us together. John has seen it, and he has told me that he will be my friend; for John is very kind, though I betray him."

"My dear child, there can be no betrayal where there is no trust; but by-the-by, what did you mean when you said that you feared John guessed something?"

He bent his eyes searchingly on her face. Antoinette looked ready to cry.

"I am very miserable," she said. "I do not remember John's exact words. Let me see—yes, he said yesterday, when we were at Versailles, that I had chosen an unsafe path, and I am afraid he must guess all about us."

Oliver smiled derisively.

"Impossible, my dear child!" he remarked, with gentle pity for her fears. "Why, John had not seen us together when he said that. No, no, depend upon it he meant something else; he always was fond of preaching, was John Dorrien; only we may just as well be on our guard, and not betray what he must not know—you understand, dearest?"

"Yes," despondently answered Antoinette, "I do understand. I am sure it is all wrong, and I am very, very miserable, for every word I hear about lies and treachery seems meant for me."

Oliver bit his lip, and looked both grave and perplexed. He was not troubled with conscientious scruples himself, and he was not prepared to find them in others; yet here were these weeds, for so he held them, springing up in most unwelcome soil, and how to uproot them he knew not. Argument seemed thrown away upon this girl, in whose power he had placed himself. His philosophy had evidently taken no deep root in her mind, and he sincerely regretted having tried its power upon her. He had opened the flood-gate of a passionate young soul, that would know, that would question, that would seek the truth, and he found it troublesome. Every human soul holds within it-

self the faculties of doubt and belief. Oliver had given the preponderance to doubt; he really liked no law, human or divine, but human law he was too sensible to violate. He had keen passions; he was fond of money, of pleasure, of ease, but he would never have placed himself within the reach of judge or jury to gratify these tastes. If he had been a Christian, he would have had the same wholesome dread of Divine judgment, and never put it in the power of Heaven to find him out; but greatness and generosity were not in him, and he would have been careful not to do too much for the Almighty. The formula which he had chosen, that he would admit nothing which his reason did not sanction, was acceptable to his tastes and inclinations. It pledged him to nothing; his moral world remained free.

Reason, which burns with so pure a flame in fine minds, is a very dim sort of candle indeed in low ones. It never told this young man that he was to lay any restraint on his passions, save so far as his safety was concerned; then, indeed, it became clear, firm, and inexorable. Oliver had the greatest contempt for common rogues and vulgar villains: they were fools.

A man of this temperament could not be a zealot. He had no strong faith in his own opinions, and, having in him a touch of that poetry which feels what is graceful and becoming, he rather liked religion of a certain kind for women. He had as a boy read the lives of the saints, and remembered some very pretty legends in those old Bollandists. If Antoinette had been a believer in those relics of a mediæval past, he would have been loath to disturb her simple faith. It would have been so much easier to leave her to her gentle superstitions, as he condescendingly called those records of the great and the good. But this could not be. He found an inquiring soul and a blank page, or one on which very little had been written; that little he did his best to efface. He was no zealot, as we have already said, and if he had meddled with Antoinette's religion, such as it was, it was because he could not very well manage her without so doing. A girl who thinks about her soul is less liable to be a docile instrument in a man's hands than the girl who is not sure that she has got one; but Antoinette's natural integrity now suddenly in-

terfered with these calculations, and gave him difficulties upon which he had not reckoned.

"My dear creature," he remarked, with a sort of candor in his look and tone, "what am I to say that will set your mind at ease? As soon as I can see my way clear, I will claim you openly; in the mean while we must stay as we are."

She looked at him, and he returned the look with a certain hardness in his gaze that quelled her. A kind of fear not of her position merely, but of Oliver Black himself, now crept round her heart for the first time. She had given herself a master, and she felt it.

"My darling," he said, very tenderly, "why will you not trust in me? Up to the present I have got on admirably with Mr. Dorrien. He actually tells me things he hides from John—on my word he does; and, what is more, it is none of my seeking. It all comes from himself. I really believe—I do—that, of his own accord, he will give up that absurd plan of fastening John to you, and that, without being unjust to dear John, who is the best and worthiest fellow in the world, he will be just to you. John is quite right in thinking that he deserves something handsome from La Maison Dorrien. He does. Let him have it; but let him not have you, my treasure. Be only patient a little while—a very little while—and I shall make all right, depend upon it."

He smiled so kindly, he spoke so confidently, that fear left Antoinette, and trust came back, as if by magic.

"Oh! yes," she warmly cried, "I know you will—I am sure of it."

"Of course I will," he returned, cheerfully, pleased, spite his cynicism, to meet the fond, confiding look of her soft, dark eyes. "It will be all so easy, if you will only let me manage."

To trust in the man she loves, to lean upon him, is a woman's irresistible impulse. Most willingly did Antoinette now throw her burden upon Oliver. Of course he would manage all. What ailed her that she had not seen that? And of course, too, he meant well and kindly to John. What ailed her that she had not seen that too? And so she listened to his plausible speech, and held it a very gospel; and all that had frightened her pride or

alarmed her conscience seemed to vanish as baleful mists fade away in the morning sun.

"And now," said Oliver, well pleased at the result of his eloquence—"now let us settle about our little interviews and our letters. Your aunt will be invaluable in that respect."

"Will she?"

So spoke Mademoiselle Mélanie, who now stood before the pair, pale with anger at their long forgetfulness of her existence. Antoinette gave a guilty start, and blushed crimson; but Oliver only laughed gayly in the irate lady's face.

"Of course she will," he resumed, in a light tone. "What should we do—what should we ever have done," he pointedly added, "without that kind aunt?"

Antoinette gave him a frightened look; she thought his audacity so great in thus addressing Mademoiselle Mélanie. But the event justified his daring: the lady tightened her lips, and looked above the two heads of the lovers as they sat on the wooden bench, and, smiling after a lofty fashion of her own, said it was a fine day.

"Yes, but I must go," hesitatingly remarked Antoinette, looking at Oliver as if fearful lest he should detain her.

He had no such inclination. He did not mean to linger long over this affair; but he was not prepared for immediate detection, and he really thought that Antionette had been out too long already.

"This is how you must account for your absence," he said, rising, and taking her arm—"you must say that you went to see your aunt, but of course you have already said that."

"No, I said nothing."

Oliver looked vexed.

"My dear creature, how could you be so imprudent? Why, you must have been missed, and—"

"Oh! I left word that I should not be in for breakfast."

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CHAPTER XXXI.

The night wind was moaning around the Hôtel Dorrien, and Antoinette sat in her room, listening to it with a beating heart. That wind was in her favor; it would enable her to steal out of the house unheard—for it was one thing to be forbidden by Mr. Dorrien to see her aunt, and it was another thing to obey him. She must and she would see Mademoiselle Mélanie. Besides, how could she help it? Were not these the only means left in her power to have any intercourse with Oliver Black? He had managed to make a whispered appointment with her that same day, and, come what might, Antoinette was bent upon keeping it.

"What, will you not stay with us, dear?" Mrs. Reginald had said, as she saw her passing by the door of her sitting-room.

"I must write to the Clarkes," Antoinette had answered, hesitatingly.

She had not yet learned to tell an untruth boldly, and she smarted under the consciousness of her meanness as she went on to her own room; but, once she was there, she forgot all save the adventure before her. She waited for an hour till the house was quiet, and even the kitchen regions had ceased to emit their usual evening clatter; then, opening her window softly, as if that act could betray her, she peeped out. Big clouds were passing gustily across the November sky. The trees of the garden shook their thin boughs to the night air; the pale moon looked out for a while, and shed a faint, gray light on the gravel paths; then, shrouding herself in her palace of mist, she vanished slowly and was seen no more.

Antoinette closed her window, and, opening her door, listened again to the sounds of the house. Only the faintest murmur of life rose up to her from below. Mr. Dorrien was out—that she knew; Mr. Brown had long been gone, and John, no doubt, was with Mrs. Reginald and his mother. All she had to do was to slip down-stairs, steal out into the garden, and let herself out through the postern-door. "Mademoiselle Mélanie will be waiting for you there at nine," Oliver had whispered that afternoon; while An-

"I am very little, aunt," replied Antoinette, somewhat sadly—"indeed, I think, sometimes, that I am nothing at all."

She never thought so more than when the carriage drove her to the door of the Hôtel Dorrien, and she found herself face to face with her grandfather on alighting at the old gates. He raised his hat with frigid courtesy to Mademoiselle Mélanie, who all but laughed with triumph in her face, and, taking his granddaughter's arm, he led her across the court to the house.

"You have been out with that lady, I presume?" he said, as they walked up the *perron*.

"Yes," answered Antoinette, trying to look unconcerned, "I have."

"Then I beg that you will do so no more. Indeed, I expect that you will hold no intercourse with Mademoiselle —I forget her name.—Brénu," addressing a porter who was passing by, "is Monsieur John in the storeroom? Yes. Well, then, tell him, please, that I beg he will let me see those papers.—As I was saying, my dear," resumed Mr. Dorrien, turning to Antoinette, "I expect you will hold no intercourse with that lady while you are under my roof. I should object to it."

He spoke with no appearance of anger, but his careless coldness was all the more mortifying. Of this, too, he seemed unaware; and the "good-morning, my dear," with which he parted from Antoinette as they had ascended the *perron*, and he entered his own rooms and left her at the foot of the staircase, was essentially urbane and gentlemanlike in its coldness.

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"O aunt you know that is not it," replied Antoinette, in an agony of fear; "but, since we must not be seen, would it not be better to go away at once?"

Without heeding her, Mademoiselle Mélanie walked on toward the house. She seemed to feel a perverse pleasure in exciting Antoinette's uneasiness by seeking the very peril the young girl was most anxious to shun. When she came within view of the library-windows, and caught, through the shrubs and trees, the faint gleam of light stealing forth from the half-closed shutters and falling on the grass, she said to Antoinette, who followed her, shivering with apprehension—

"What light is that?"

"It is John's light. He sits there writing," answered Antoinette, in her lowest whisper.

Mademoiselle Mélanie laughed, and the laugh, though low, sounded so distinct in the stillness of the garden, that Antoinette gave up in despair all hope of concealment. But Fortune favored the audacious lady. She walked up and down the front of the house with reckless curiosity; then, having seen as much as the closed doors and windows would let her see, she turned back. Oh, what a sigh of relief did Antoinette breathe when they had passed the postern-door, and were fairly out of the dangerous garden! With the quick reaction of the young, she laughed at her own fears, and said gayly:

"O aunt, I never was so frightened in all my life. How daring you are!"

Mademoiselle Mélanie smiled in austere triumph. She was no coward; she knew it, and gloried in her bravery.

"Have we far to go?" asked Antoinette, glancing doubtfully at the narrow lane along which they were walking. "I do not like the look of this place, do you, aunt?"

"What do I care about it?" retorted Mademoiselle Mélanie, impatiently.

Antoinette put no more questions. Their goal was soon reached, and, with another sigh of relief, Antoinette ran up the narrow stairs of her aunt's abode, chatting all the way.

"Now, aunt, you are going to treat us," she said; "you must, you know. What are we going to have?"

"What will you have?" asked Mademoiselle Mélanie,

taking the key of her apartment from her pocket, and opening the door.

Antoinette entered the kitchen at once, opened a cupboard, looked around her, then said, coaxingly—

"O aunt, let us have some pancakes!"

Mademoiselle Mélanie was not like the traditionary conventional villain, always on the stilts of her own wickedness. Wickedness with her was very much a matter of temper, and therefore perhaps she always went farther in its ways than she had intended. Harsh and unkind though she often was to Antoinette, she nevertheless liked her as she liked nothing and no one else, so she now smiled almost kindly in the girl's face, and said, pleasantly enough, "Yes, let us have pancakes."

Antoinette was delighted at this unexpected concession. She liked pancakes. Moreover, they recalled a pleasant evening in her young love, when she and Oliver had made them together in La Ruya. To make them again was almost like going back to those unclouded days of La Ruya.

"I see you have got eggs, aunt," she said; "but have you milk?—yes, quite right. Well, then, have you flour? No—yes, you have—don't you see it there? O aunt, what a treat we are going to have! But I must lose no time."

At once she set to work. She had scarcely begun, when there was a ring at the door. Mademoiselle Mélanie went and opened it, and from the kitchen Antoinette heard Oliver Black's disappointed exclamation:

"What, she is not here!"

"You will find her in the kitchen," answered Mademoiselle Mélanie, and the next moment Oliver Black's handsome face appeared at the kitchen-door looking in at Antoinette.

"Oh, come and help me!" she cried—"oh, do; it will be such fun!"

"And pray what are you doing?" he asked, without coming in.

"Pancakes—come and help me."

"No, darling, not on any account. I am afraid of the flour, and if you will take my advice," he added, rather gravely, "you will not meddle with it for the same reason."

Antoinette looked in his face with some wonder, and said, with mock gravity—

"But I am not afraid of flour, Oliver."

"And to-morrow morning," he dryly remarked, "when the maid gives a shake to Mademoiselle Dorrien's clothes, she will detect a little white spot, and, having tested it chemically, she will pronounce it to be flour. Query—how comes Mademoiselle Dorrien to have any thing to do with flour? The matter's submitted to the cook, the cook carries it to Mrs. Reginald, who transmits it to Mr. Dorrien, who catechises his granddaughter, who bursts into tears. On such slight accidents hang the fates of empires and of ill-fated lovers."

Antoinette laughed, but she also looked ready to cry. This perpetual secrecy was very hard to bear, for one who had been accustomed to the most thoughtless liberty.

"Oh dear! oh, dear!" she cried, stamping her foot in vexation, "can I not make even pancakes in peace?"

"No, darling, you cannot," retorted the inexorable Oliver? "besides, my dearest," he added, more tenderly, "I am jealous of the pancakes. They absorb your mind, they take up your attention, ay, and your smiles, and you must think of nothing, and no one, save Oliver Black when he is present."

"Very well," submissively replied Antoinette, taking off the apron she had put on, and giving the mixture she had begun preparing a regretful, wistful look—"very well; but what will Aunt Mélanie say at this waste of her good things?"

"If Aunt Mélanie has the least consideration," replied Oliver, smiling, "she will kindly attend to this matter while we talk over our little affairs."

Antoinette did not look sanguine of this result, but she proved to be mistaken. Mademoiselle Mélanie did agree to take up her niece's deserted post, and, without even a look of ill-humor, repaired forthwith to the kitchen, leaving the door open, however—kitchens and sitting-rooms are often in close conjunction in cheap apartments in Paris—so as to hear every word that passed between Oliver and Antoinette.

A low wood-fire smouldered on the hearth, a little lamp burned with a bright clear light on the table; dingy though the room was, fire, light, and evening, gave it a look of comfort.

"And now," said Antoinette, drawing her chair to one

side of the fireplace, and looking at Oliver, who was sitting down on the other side—"now, Oliver, tell me all sorts of things. No, stay where you are," she added, as he wanted to draw his chair near hers. "I like being free to look at you."

She spoke her thoughts. To look at her lover freely, openly, was pleasant, after the humiliation and restraint of her daily life. She was not one of those girls for whom concealment has any charms; she hated it as a bondage, and also as a sort of baseness, which hourly stung her pride. Oliver stroked his silky black beard and smiled.

"You are awfully pretty to-night, Antoinette," he said. Antoinette blushed, then laughed, then looked demure.

"What next?" she asked.

"You are decidedly prettier than Mademoiselle Basnage," he continued.

Antoinette's bright eyes became riveted on him in sudden and silent wonder.

"And how do you know that?" she asked at length.

"I had the honor of dining with Mademoiselle Basnage's papa last night, and, as mademoiselle appeared, I can form an opinion.

Antoinette still looked surprised and perplexed.

"I had no idea that you knew them," she said, after a pause.

"Oh, I knew Monsieur Basnage before I knew you, darling—very slightly, of course—but mademoiselle I did not see before yesterday."

"Well, what is Mademoiselle Basnage like?" asked Antoinette, with evident curiosity and interest.

"A fair girl—blue eyes, blond hair, sylph-like figure, etc."

Antoinette was silent awhile, then she said, half in jest, half in earnest—

"Blondes are insipid."

"Decidedly so," replied Oliver, smiling; "no rule of beauty is more absolute. But, like all rules, it admits of exceptions; and of these Mademoiselle Basnage is one. She is not merely pretty, but also quite sparkling. John pays you a rare compliment, Miss Dorrien, if he really declines that young lady for your sake."

"I did not know that he had ever seen her," replied

Antoinette, whose face was in a glow, certainly not caught from the mild fire at which she was looking; her eyes were downcast, and Oliver looked at her long and keenly without meeting her gaze.

"Come, now, darling," he said, in a tone of careless banter, "be honest, and confess that John has been making love to you. Do not look so affronted; he has a right to make love to you, you know."

This was said with a despondent sigh.

"No man has such a right, unless he receives it from me," answered Antoinette, with a little flash of her dark eye.

"And you have not given it to John? That is right, darling; never do. I cannot spare you."

"I have not given it to him, aad he has not implied the least wish for it," said Antoinette, with some emotion. "What he was when I came to Paris—kind and friendly—he is still—very friendly—but no more."

"Dear old John! He shows his bad taste there; and yet I cannot be angry with him, darling—I cannot, on my honor. Well, you wonder that I know these Basnages; and so you may. Monsieur I have known months, as one knows men in business—that is to say, not at all. I met him yesterday in the Palais Royal, and he button-holed me, and was so friendly, by Jove! that there was no making him out. Nothing would do him, but that I should dine with him at his own house that same evening. I tried to get out of it, but I saw that it would only be *reculer pour mieux sauter*. So I thought I would have it over, and see what the man wanted. I did not find it out till dinner was nearly over. A most luxurious little dinner it was, with plenty of Madame Veuve Cliquot's best. Some one must have told him my tender failing for that widowed lady's vintage, and so, being bent on fascinating me, he gave it out with no sparing hand. The only result of his diplomacy was that all dinner-time I thought, "What does the man want?"

"I know," said Antoinette, forcing a little laugh; "Monsieur Basnage cannot get John Dorrien for his daughter, and so he wants you."

"You have hit the right nail on the head," replied Oliver, gayly. "Of course that was a *première entrevue*; only,

to spare my coyness, I was not apprised of the fact, and was most unconsciously surveyed by Mademoiselle Basnage's blue eyes. I must say it was taking an unfair advantage of my bachelor innocence, but forewarned is forearmed. I will not be so entrapped in a hurry; and, if I am again asked to dinner by business friends, I shall put a few pertinent inquiries. Have you got daughters? Married or unmarried? How many? And, unless the answers are satisfactory, I decline absolutely."

Antoinette laughed very gayly on hearing this. She had forgotten all about Monsieur Basnage's invitation, and its motives, but Mademoiselle Mélanie, who had been listening in the kitchen to the conversation, now came out with a basin in her hand, and said, in her eager way:

"Well, Mr. Black, and what did Monsieur Basnage want with you?"

"To show him to Mademoiselle Basnage," answered Antoinette — "at least, he says so, conceited young man!"

"Monsieur Basnage wanted business information," replied Oliver, "and, instead of getting it, he gave it."

"What was it?" asked Mademoiselle Mélanie, still eager, and coming nearer.

On hearing the word business, Antoinette's face fell and she looked doleful. Oliver Black, who sat with his elbow leaning on the marble slab of the chimney, smiled down at her.

"Perhaps Antoinette can tell us what Monsieur Basnage wanted to find out," he said, carelessly.

But in vain his tone was light; alarm suddenly spread over Antoinette's countenance.

"Oh, pray do not ask me!" she entreated; "I know nothing—and do let us have the pancakes. Aunt, may I" —with pathetic eyes—"may I toss the pancakes here, on this fire? it is quite bright now."

"Yes, of course you may," replied Mademoiselle Mélanie, seeming in great good-humor.

Antoinette started up and ran to the kitchen for the frying-pan.

"What is it?" asked Mademoiselle Mélanie, fastening her sinister eyes on the young man's, and sinking her voice to a whisper.

He shook his head a little impatiently, and did not answer. Antoinette came back in high glee, brandishing a little frying-pan.

"This is business," she said, addressing the pair before her. "Aunt, are you ready?"

Mademoiselle Mélanie was ready, every thing was soon ready, as well as Mademoiselle Mélanie. A little rickety table was drawn forward and set out, such crockery as Mademoiselle Mélanie's meagre stores afforded was produced, and what Antoinette considered the business of the evening began.

Every one knows, or ought to know, what the tossing of pancakes is, and how thrilling is the operation to the tyro in that act. For is not every thing at stake?—is it not pancakes or no pancakes—to be or not to be?

Antoinette tossed her pancakes with a face full of breathless fear at every venture, with a cry of delight at every success. Oliver Black looked at her with a half-amused, half-moody look. She was a clever girl, to be sure, but she was rather childish too. She was very fond of him, of course, but it seemed, strangely enough, as if he could produce no durable impression upon her. He made no attempt to renew the subject of Monsieur Basnage; he doubtless felt that the moment was unpropitious. He let her toss her pancakes, set them on the table, praise them, laugh at them, and finally eat them—he let her do all these things, we say, in peace. He had no objection to help her in the latter part of the business—for he too liked pancakes—and he uttered not a word that could break the harmony of the evening, till Mademoiselle Mélanie, who felt both irritated and impatient at his obstinate silence, uttered an imperative "Well, Mr. Black?"

"Well, what?" he calmly rejoined.

"Will you tell us what it is?"

"What what is?" he asked, as if he had wholly forgotten; then carelessly, "Oh! what Monsieur Basnage wanted me for. Business, and, unfortunately, business bearing much upon ourselves."

He cast a look full of pathos at Antoinette, but it lit on a crisp brown bit of pancake into which her little teeth were biting, and was lost. The words were not thrown away, however, and she said promptly:

"O Oliver, what have we to do with that tiresome Mr. Basnage's business?"

"A great deal, I am sorry to say. This matter may separate us for a long time."

Antoinette's color came and went; she pushed her plate away with a look of dismay.

Oh, what was it? Were they sending him away? Would it be for long?

He shook his head. No, that was not it, but he feared he should have to leave La Maison Dorrien. In short, he was afraid that it was no longer the firm for him.

Antoinette looked most woe-begone. The gladness of the evening had departed; trouble was coming, and there was no shunning it now.

"Well," he said, desperately, "since you will know the truth"—Antoinette had expressed no such wish—"I must tell it to you. Monsieur Basnage thinks that John has persuaded Mr. Dorrien to have a paper-mill, or a factory, or a *usine*, or that sort of thing, of his own. The consequence to Monsieur Basnage will be serious, of course, for he will thus lose one of his best customers, and that was what he wanted to find out from me. I told him nothing, you may be sure. I was not going to betray business secrets to him, to begin with."

"Of course not," cried Antoinette, eagerly.

Mademoiselle Mélanie smiled grimly. Oliver resumed with perfect candor:

"Besides, I know nothing, so, as I said, I got instead of giving information. Well, the results of this scheme, which will be unpleasing to Monsieur Basnage, will simply be fatal to us."

"How so?" asked Antoinette, opening her eyes in amazement.

"Why, because all Mr. Dorrien's available capital must needs be involved in it."

"And there will be none for his granddaughter," cried Mademoiselle Mélanie, her eyes sparkling with anger.

"Yes, that is it," said Oliver, nodding. "I did hope that, as time wore on, and you and John found out that Mr. Dorrien's plan was not to be thought of—I did hope that I might speak to Mr. Dorrien, and, putting by this cruel secrecy, openly ask him for his granddaughter's hand;

but now Mr. Dorrien could return me only one answer: 'Sir, you are penniless, and my granddaughter is portionless. I wish you a very good-morning.' In short," added Oliver, with a deep sigh, "we are worse off than ever."

Antoinette looked very grave. More grave than sorrowful, and Oliver was quick to perceive it, though he chose to ignore the fact. Mademoiselle Mélanie folded her arms across her breast, and, nodding ironically at her niece's lover, asked—

"Well, and what will you do?"

"Go off to America," he answered, with a gloomy laugh, "or to California, or to Australia, or to anywhere, in short, where money can be made; and when I have made a decent fortune, come back and claim this little girl, who takes it all so coolly."

A deep blush spread over Antoinette's face.

"What can I do, Oliver?" she asked. "If I could only help you! Oh, if I could, how willingly I would do so!"

"Help me! Why, of course you can help me," he slowly replied.

"I?" And at once she looked startled and afraid. What was he going to ask of her?

"Why, yes," he pursued, studiously ignoring the look; "for you can find out from John what truth there is in all this."

"O Oliver! Why, John never says a word upon business to me or to any one."

"Could you not lead the conversation to it?"

"Oh, no, indeed I could not!"

"Say you would not!" sharply remarked Mademoiselle Mélanie.

"No, I could not," persisted Antoinette. "Indeed, Oliver, you may believe me, I cannot do it."

There was something almost pathetic in her earnestness.

"Then do not," good-naturedly replied Oliver; "but one thing you can do, darling, without broaching the subject with John: you can find out the truth by slight tokens. Go to the library for a book; see if there be a stray letter about, an architect's card, some pamphlet on paper-mills; in short, you are too clever not to discover something or other."

"But, Oliver, what good will it do?" asked Antoinette with an effort. "If the thing is to be, you will know it soon enough."

"Yes, but suppose that I can so manage that the thing should not be?" he quietly replied. "John is the best fellow in the world, he means well, but he is awfully venturesome and ambitious. I consider this scheme of his the perdition of Mr. Dorrien's business. All his capital will be sunk it it, and in the event of a war, of a revolution, or of any thing of the kind, he will have nothing to fall back upon. It is sheer madness, and, because it is madness, John will not say a word of it to me. If I only had a hint to go by, I could lead Mr. Dorrien to the subject."

"Tell him what Monsieur Basnage has said," eagerly interrupted Antoinette.

Oliver rebuked her with a look.

"My dearest, that would be downright treason."

Antoinette hung her head abashed; he resumed:

"No, I must, as I said, have a hint to go by. If I have, I can, I hope, influence Mr. Dorrien. At least, I can try. If I fail, I shall at least have done my duty, and endeavored to save his fortune, and yours too, my poor darling!"

"Why should that John Dorrien risk the money? It is not his," here remarked Mademoiselle Mélanie.

"Of course not," replied Oliver; "he is all wrong there, but he does not see it in that light, poor fellow."

"Stand by him, do," cried Mademoiselle Mélanie, wrathfully.

"Yes, I do stand by him so far as his intentions go," sturdily replied Oliver. "A more honest man than John, I do not know."

"Bah!" said she.

They did it well, these two, but inexperience is not always simplicity, and Antoinette, looking at them in some perplexity, was but half convinced. Somehow or other their speech had not the ring of true gold in her ear. She sighed deeply, hung her head despondently, and said, in a low tone:

"I am very sorry, Oliver. I am sorry that John commits such a mistake, and that I cannot help you; but I am too stupid. I should never know how to do it."

This was not what Oliver had expected, but he bore

the disappointment with philosophic composure, shrugged his shoulders, laughed, said he had always thought of California as a confusion, and the diggings as the best way of getting out of difficulties. His gayety was forced, and his mirth rather dreary. Antoinette's tears fell slowly. She was troubled, grieved, and very unhappy. This life of secrecy, plotting, and spying, was too much for a nature which was both frank and pure, and which, though touched by strange evil, was not yet tainted. Regardless of pancakes, she laid her head on the table, and, with a smothered sob, wished that she were dead. Oliver went and comforted her at once.

"Now, darling," he whispered in her ear, "you must not. For perhaps John will give it up, or something will turn up; in short, it may be all right."

"Then why did you worry me?" asked Antoinette, smiling up at him through her tears. "The pancakes are cold, and not good, and I dare not stay any longer, and it has all been that horrid business."

"Well, dearest," said Oliver, without detaining her, "it shall not be business the next time you come here, and as to what I said about finding out any thing, do not mind it, you might commit some fatal mistake—better not."

"Yes," said Mademoiselle Mélanie, smoothing down with suspicious alacrity, "better not, Antoinette, you might commit a mistake, as Oliver says."

"You think me very silly," said Antoinette, pouting as she put on her hat.

They both protested that they did not, but still urged her not to attempt finding out any thing, lest she should give rise to suspicion.

"Very well," she impatiently answered; "but I know you think me stupid. Of course I am"—she remembered having said it—"and therefore, as I said, I must not meddle in this."

Oliver laughed, and made some pleasant answer, and said he would walk back with her and Mademoiselle Mélanie as far as the postern-door. There was not much said on the way. Antoinette's heart was sinking at the fear of discovery, though she would not confess her apprehensions. Had she been alone with Oliver, she might have done so, for his manner to her was almost always

gentle and kind; but to breathe a word to her aunt on the subject might have roused that lady to some act of daring which would have terrified the young girl out of her senses, so she was silent; but Oliver seemed to guess what her thoughts were, for, as they stood all three at the little door, he whispered:

"Do not be afraid, darling. I shall stay here a quarter of an hour, to make sure that you are safe in."

"Oh! no, no," whispered Antoinette, turning her pale, startled face toward him. "To know that you are there would make me lose all presence of mind. Pray go—pray go away at once."

Her entreaties, though spoken low, were so urgent that Oliver could not resist them; so, merely waiting to see her open the door, which made no noise, glide in like a shadow, and close it again ever so softly, he walked away with Mademoiselle Mélanie.

They did not speak till they were fairly out of the narrow lane, and once more in the open streets, now almost silent, with their closed shops and deserted pavements. Now and then a carriage rumbled away in the distance, or the footsteps of some belated passenger were heard in the darkness; but Paris, though not asleep, was getting drowsy, and preparing for the long and deep slumber of the night.

"Well," said Mademoiselle Mélanie, getting impatient at Oliver's persistent silence, "what does all that mean?"

"No good," he answered, dryly. There was a pause; then he remarked, abruptly, "Strange that Mr. Dorrien should care so little for so charming, sweet, and winning a creature as Antoinette."

"Then you are sure he does not care for her?" said she.

"Oh! quite sure." This was spoken with a deep sigh. "One might almost imagine that he does not look upon her as his son's child."

He had waited till they came to a lamp-post to put this home-thrust, and, looking full in her face as he uttered it, he waited for her reply; but Mademoiselle Mélanie bore the look with a stolidity that defied all scrutiny, and merely saying, "This is my house; thank you, good-night," she rang the bell, was admitted, and closed the door in his face, as if unaware that he had remained standing there. Oliver laughed as he walked away. Nothing

Mademoiselle Mélanie said or did could affront him, but her manner strengthened rather than weakened the doubt he really entertained.

It had come, when or how he scarcely knew; sometimes he fancied he had first felt it at La Ruya on finding Antoinette so unlike a Dorrien, and also, it seemed to him, older looking than eighteen. Sometimes he traced that unpleasant suspicion to a remark made by Mrs. Reginald in his presence:

"Surely, child, you are more than eighteen," she had said, after looking hard at Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter. "No? Ah! well, I remember you always did look older than you were."

A few careless questions had enabled Oliver to ascertain from Antoinette herself that this "always" must refer to the time when she had come back to her grandfather's house, after her elder sister's death. Suppose she were herself that elder sister, the destitute heiress of that Count d'Armaillé, who was the boast of Mademoiselle Mélanie's life, and that it had been George Dorrien's child who had died? Would not that account for Mademoiselle Mélanie's evident affection, otherwise inexplicable to Oliver, for her sister-in-law's daughter?

"It is all very hazy," he now thought, turning away from Mademoiselle Mélanie's door, and walking slowly back to his own lodging. "She does look more than eighteen. She is girlish enough sometimes, but sometimes, too, she is quite womanly. And Mr. Dorrien does not like her, that is certain, and that Mélanie is capable of any trick. I wonder the idea has never occurred to him. Such substitution would have been wonderfully easy. Well, if she be not a Dorrien, it will certainly be found out in the end, and then it will be all over—all over indeed!"

Even without any such catastrophe coming to pass, Oliver was much inclined to think that it was all over. He had committed a mistake, and he saw it. To win Antoinette's heart, was not to win with it the certainty of Mr. Dorrien's inheritance, and of John's position. Mr. Dorrien was a cool, not a doting grandfather, and Antoinette was getting quite unmanageable. She was charming, certainly, and Oliver liked her; but suppose she were the penniless niece of Mademoiselle Mélanie, he felt that it must be all

over. Something else he must try; that would never do. He sighed as he remembered how pretty she looked when setting out the pancakes; but he could bear it. If he had married Antoinette, he would have made her a very fair sort of husband. There was nothing cruel or actively unkind about him, and he had no strong hates; but he could slip off a love or a friendship much more easily than he could his gloves, which were always rather tight-fitting. He had never had but one genuine feeling in his life—his liking for his dead father. It was neither passionate nor deep, but it was true. As to Antoinette, she was charming, but so was blue-eyed Mademoiselle Basnage; and Antoinette had been growing troublesome and rather perverse of late. She had provoked him already, she would provoke him again ere he had reached the end of his journey. The wind had been with him up to the present, but it seemed to be veering now. A squall was coming, as sure as his name was Oliver Black. Whether it would originate in Antoinette's disobedience, or in her doubtful parentage, Oliver did not know; he only knew that it would be her doing, and that he would beware of her. Now suppose she were not Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter, how could Mademoiselle Basnage be brought into play? He stood still to cogitate awhile, but soon discarded the thought with a puff of the cigar he had lit on parting from Mademoiselle Mélanie. *Cui bono?* He was not a far-seeing schemer, by any means. Life was too uncertain, too changeful for deep-laid plots, thought Oliver Black. There was but one thing to do: never to lose a chance, and to be ready for any thing that might turn up.

A wide-reaching maxim, if ever there was one, and one admirably suited to men of this man's turn of mind.

CHAPTER XXXII.

When she closed the postern-door and stood in the garden, Antoinette did not move for several minutes. She was dreadfully frightened, and she knew it; and she also

knew that her very fear was it itself a danger. "I must be quite cool and quite calm," she said to herself, "for if I lose my presence of mind, why, I am simply undone. The first thing is to be sure that I am really alone."

It was not very likely that any one should be wandering in a dark garden on a dreary November night, for it was now past eleven; but in her present mood Antoinette thought all things probable, and she looked about her as anxiously as if she expected Mr. Dorrien or Mrs. Reginald to appear from behind every tree. No such vision came, however. The moon had long been gone, and heavy clouds obscured the sky. The garden was intensely dark. Antoinette heard the plash of the fountain, but caught no glimpse of its pale stone figure. She stole along on tiptoe, shivering with fear when the gravel creaked under her feet, but yet making her way to the house. When she came within view of the library-windows, she saw with a sinking heart that John's light was still burning. What should she do? Suppose that in the stillness of the night he heard her opening the door, and, coming out, caught her in the act of entering the house surreptitiously! What should she do then? What should she say? That she had gone out to take the air, at that hour, on such a night as this? John would never believe her, and she would have all the shame of a useless lie!

"I cannot risk it!" thought Antoinette, in the agony of her fear. "I will spend the night here rather than undergo so bitter and so deserved a humiliation."

For with fear there came to her that remorse which is born of danger. Going out, Antoinette had only felt that she was venturing on an escapade, sanctioned by her aunt's presence, and excused by her grandfather's tyranny. But coming in she felt guilty and penitent. Oh! it was wrong, very wrong indeed to go about so at night—so wrong that, come what might, she, Antoinette, would never do it again. For what had come of it? Cold pancakes, no pleasure, dreary business talk, and now shame and danger lying in wait for her behind that door which she would have given worlds never to have opened. In her fear she almost thought of spending the night in the garden, if, as she began to apprehend, John's vigil was to be prolonged into the small hours. At all events she could wait awhile,

and see if there was no chance of his retiring before she ventured on that dreadful door.

But nothing is harder in life, in things great or small, than to follow out a purpose. When Antoinette decided upon not venturing within until John had retired, she reckoned without the changes of the night. Before she had been a quarter of an hour in the garden, the clouds which obscured the sky had melted into heavy rain; before half an hour was over, she was wet through, and stood shivering in the unavailing shelter of the house-wall. She leaned against it vainly, cowering from the storm; but the wind, which drove the rain full in her face, also seemed to pierce her through, and with a feeling of despair Antoinette asked herself if she must spend the night thus.

At length John's light vanished. That little gleam, which had been so full of terror to her, suddenly left the grass, and the garden became as dark and cheerless as twelve o'clock, now striking far away, and a rainy night could make it. Antoinette lost no time. She stole on tiptoe to the door, and with a beating heart put in the key. It turned smoothly in the lock, but, alas! that door which, as she had ascertained, was never bolted, now resisted all her efforts. It was fast, evidently secured from within. The truth flashed across her mind. She had committed a fatal mistake. The door was not left unbolted, as she had foolishly thought. Only it was not yet secured when she looked at it at night, and it was unfastened when she saw it in the morning. "Then I must spend the night here," thought Antoinette, "and get in as best I may in the morning. I dare say I shall get my death of cold! Well, any thing is better than to be found out."

But even this dreary comfort was denied her. As she turned away from the door, wondering whether the river-god would afford her better shelter than the cold and bare house-wall, the library window was suddenly thrown open, and John Dorrien walked out with a swift, firm step, like one who has a purpose. He passed by her without seeing her. He was evidently going to the postern-door to make it safe. Antoinette's heart leaped with a sudden hope. Why should she not steal in through the opening he had left, and make her way to her own room undetected and unseen? In a moment she stood within the warm library,

which lamp and fire filled with comfort, and she was crossing it swiftly, when Carlo started up from where he lay curled on his master's bureau, and sprang toward her with a sharp and sudden bark, that soon changed into a glad whine of welcome. But the bark had been heard, and, before Antoinette had time to reach the door that opened on the landing, John Dorrien stood by her side.

"At last!" he said. "O Antoinette, never do that again—never! And you are wet through!—Do you want death, then, as well as destruction?"

He was very pale, and his white lips quivered with emotion. Antoinette heard him, and could not utter one word of reply. She felt she could have died with very shame. It was not merely her return that was detected, but her absence that had been perceived all along.

"I do wish I were dead!" she cried, clasping her hands above her head in a passion of despair. "O John, John, do not be hard upon me!"

He went and closed the window, then, coming back to her, he led her to the fire, and, taking off her wet cloak, made her sit down and dry herself.

"You are shivering," he said, pityingly, and forgetting his displeasure as he saw the plight she was in. "O Antoinette, never do that again!—never! never!"

He now spoke and looked so kindly that she felt instant relief. A while ago to be detected by him had seemed the hardest portion of her hard lot, and now she was so sure of his help and protection that she thought nothing of it. Of course he would not betray her, of course he would help her out of this danger, and of course, being so good and kind, her friend—had he not always said so?—he would forgive her folly and keep her counsel.

"John," she said, looking earnestly in his face, "I went to see my aunt Mélanie."

"Yes," he answered, looking at the fire, "I know you did."

She wondered in silent anguish what more he knew, but of this John said very little. He had to go out himself by the back-door, he remarked, and he had seen her with her aunt walking a few yards before him. It was not difficult for him to guess how she had gone out, and how she meant to come in. He had sat up for her, he added, but

she had tried the door so softly that the attempt had escaped his ear. "I am grieved that you should be so wet," he continued, regretfully; "but it never occurred to me that you would stay out in that rain. Was I not your friend, Antoinette?'

"O John, forgive me!" she entreated, "I shall never do it again—never!"

"Do not, for another time you might be detected, and that would be sad."

He said no more, put no questions, and he uttered no reproaches. That she should dry her wet feet seemed his chief thought.

"If you could have a fire in your room," he said, regretfully; "but that is impossible.—How you shiver! Wait a while, I shall bring you some wine."

He started up, and was gone before she could remonstrate.

"He does not believe me, or, at least, not half believe me," said Antoinette to her own sad heart; "and so while I was making pancakes for Oliver, and plotting against him, he was sitting up for me, and only wanted to save me from the snare I had run my foolish head into.—O Carlo, Carlo," she added, as the little fellow, still on the bureau, looked, with a whine, in her face, "you did well to give me up for him." But to be thus feelingly addressed was not Carlo's object. He wanted caresses, and, not getting these, he stretched out a paw, wherewith he scratched his former mistress's shoulder.

"Then you do like me after all," softly whispered Antoinette; "you do like me, Carlo."

She turned her face toward the dog, and in so doing her eye fell on a broad sheet of paper lying open before her. It was covered with lines, and bore the following heading, in a round hand:

"*Plan de l' Usine.*"

All that Oliver had told her about John's plans, all that he had urged her to find out, rushed back to her mind. Mechanically she stretched out her hand as if to take the paper, then drew it back with a sort of horror at the thought of paying back John's trusting kindness by treachery so

shameful. "Never, never!" she thought, turning back to the fire with a smile that seemed to defy the temptation.

Antoinette was still smiling and pacifying Carlo with a caress, when her color, which had returned a little, died away; she had heard Mr. Dorrien's voice in the hall addressing his young cousin.

"How late you sit up to-night, John!" he was saying. "Is there extra work?" Wild with fear, Antoinette did not wait to hear John's reply, but looked about her for means of escape. If the window had still been open she would have fled out once more into the dark night; but John had closed and fastened it. Quick as thought she flew across the room, and, opening the door of the next apartment, closed it again on herself, regardless of the sudden darkness which she thus entered. And it was well that she was so prompt, for, without giving John time to say a word, Mr. Dorrien opened the door of the library, and entered the room almost at the same moment that his granddaughter had taken refuge in the next.

"I thought you were out, sir," said John, when a look had told him, to his infinite relief, that Antoinette had escaped.

"No, my head ached; I staid within and fell asleep in my chair. You opened a door, John, and that woke me. What a good, bright fire you have! mine is out." Mr. Dorrien, who looked pale and ill, sat down in the chair which Antoinette had left vacant, and warmed his thin hands at the cheerful glow of the blazing wood.

"How is the paper-mill going on?" he asked, after a while, glancing at the sheet which had caught Antoinette's eye.

"Oh! very well indeed," replied John, with sudden animation. "Do you wish to hear any thing about it, sir?"

"Not to-night; I am not equal to it, John. Tell me, rather, how you are getting on with Miss Dorrien."

John stood facing his cousin. A sudden glow, which did not escape Mr. Dorrien's notice, overspread his countenance, but he answered quietly enough:

"Miss Dorrien has not been here long, sir."

"Come, John, that is not a straightforward answer," said Mr. Dorrien, a little impatiently, "and therefore not

such an answer as you should give me on this subject. I feel pretty certain," he added, with a touch of irony, "that you know how you stand in the young lady's favor."

John was silent awhile. When he spoke, it was with remarkable gravity of look and manner.

"I fear I have committed a mistake," he said—"I mean that Miss Dorrien and I are perhaps not suited to each other."

Mr. Dorrien looked annoyed.

"You ought to marry, John," he said; "you know what passed between us on that subject. I wish you had never taken that crotchet about Antoinette in your head. I wish she had never come here. I wanted you to see Mademoiselle Basnage. She is in Paris now—a charming girl, whose money would have been invaluable to us. Can you not see her, at least?"

"But, if I see Mademoiselle Basnage with that intention," replied John, smiling, "what becomes of the paper-mill?"

Mr. Dorrien did not answer at once. When he spoke at last, it was to say, rather dryly:

"Are you sure that Miss Dorrien and you will not suit?"

"No," replied John, hesitatingly, and involuntarily glancing toward the door of the next room, "I am not sure—I only fear."

"Time will show," said Mr. Dorrien, rising. "Good-night, John. Your fire has done me a world of good. Are you sitting up still?"

"Only for a little while longer," answered the young man.

Mr. Dorrien left him. John listened to his step going up-stairs, and thought how slow and heavy it was getting. Not till it ceased did he venture to open the door of the next room. He went to it, lamp in hand, but no token of Antoinette did he see. He called her softly, she did not answer. She was gone, evidently; but how had she escaped? A blast of wind, which stirred the curtains of a window looking on the court, and which nearly extinguished his lamp, made the mystery clear. Antoinette had gone out that way. He closed the window, crossed the library, and tried the front-door. It was ajar. Antoinette had evidently jumped down into the court, stolen up

the disappointment with philosophic composure, shrugged his shoulders, laughed, said he had always thought of California as a conclusion, and the diggings as the best way of getting out of difficulties. His gayety was forced, and his mirth rather dreary. Antoinette's tears fell slowly. She was troubled, grieved, and very unhappy. This life of secrecy, plotting, and spying, was too much for a nature which was both frank and pure, and which, though touched by strange evil, was not yet tainted. Regardless of pancakes, she laid her head on the table, and, with a smothered sob, wished that she were dead. Oliver went and comforted her at once.

"Now, darling," he whispered in her ear, "you must not. For perhaps John will give it up, or something will turn up; in short, it may be all right."

"Then why did you worry me?" asked Antoinette, smiling up at him through her tears. "The pancakes are cold, and not good, and I dare not stay any longer, and it has all been that horrid business."

"Well, dearest," said Oliver, without detaining her, "it shall not be business the next time you come here, and as to what I said about finding out any thing, do not mind it, you might commit some fatal mistake—better not."

"Yes," said Mademoiselle Mélanie, smoothing down with suspicious alacrity, "better not, Antoinette, you might commit a mistake, as Oliver says."

"You think me very silly," said Antoinette, pouting as she put on her hat.

They both protested that they did not, but still urged her not to attempt finding out any thing, lest she should give rise to suspicion.

"Very well," she impatiently answered; "but I know you think me stupid. Of course I am"—she remembered having said it—"and therefore, as I said, I must not meddle in this."

Oliver laughed, and made some pleasant answer, and said he would walk back with her and Mademoiselle Mélanie as far as the postern-door. There was not much said on the way. Antoinette's heart was sinking at the fear of discovery, though she would not confess her apprehensions. Had she been alone with Oliver, she might have done so, for his manner to her was almost always

gentle and kind; but to breathe a word to her aunt on the subject might have roused that lady to some act of daring which would have terrified the young girl out of her senses, so she was silent; but Oliver seemed to guess what her thoughts were, for, as they stood all three at the little door, he whispered:

"Do not be afraid, darling. I shall stay here a quarter of an hour, to make sure that you are safe in."

"Oh! no, no," whispered Antoinette, turning her pale, startled face toward him. "To know that you are there would make me lose all presence of mind. Pray go—pray go away at once."

Her entreaties, though spoken low, were so urgent that Oliver could not resist them; so, merely waiting to see her open the door, which made no noise, glide in like a shadow, and close it again ever so softly, he walked away with Mademoiselle Mélanie.

They did not speak till they were fairly out of the narrow lane, and once more in the open streets, now almost silent, with their closed shops and deserted pavements. Now and then a carriage rumbled away in the distance, or the footsteps of some belated passenger were heard in the darkness; but Paris, though not asleep, was getting drowsy, and preparing for the long and deep slumber of the night.

"Well," said Mademoiselle Mélanie, getting impatient at Oliver's persistent silence, "what does all that mean?"

"No good," he answered, dryly. There was a pause; then he remarked, abruptly, "Strange that Mr. Dorrien should care so little for so charming, sweet, and winning a creature as Antoinette."

"Then you are sure he does not care for her?" said she.

"Oh! quite sure." This was spoken with a deep sigh. "One might almost imagine that he does not look upon her as his son's child."

He had waited till they came to a lamp-post to put this home-thrust, and, looking full in her face as he uttered it, he waited for her reply; but Mademoiselle Mélanie bore the look with a stolidity that defied all scrutiny, and merely saying, "This is my house; thank you, good-night," she rang the bell, was admitted, and closed the door in his face, as if unaware that he had remained standing there. Oliver laughed as he walked away. Nothing

Mademoiselle Mélanie said or did could affront him, but her manner strengthened rather than weakened the doubt he really entertained.

It had come, when or how he scarcely knew; sometimes he fancied he had first felt it at La Ruya on finding Antoinette so unlike a Dorrien, and also, it seemed to him, older looking than eighteen. Sometimes he traced that unpleasant suspicion to a remark made by Mrs. Reginald in his presence:

"Surely, child, you are more than eighteen," she had said, after looking hard at Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter. "No? Ah! well, I remember you always did look older than you were."

A few careless questions had enabled Oliver to ascertain from Antoinette herself that this "always" must refer to the time when she had come back to her grandfather's house, after her elder sister's death. Suppose she were herself that elder sister, the destitute heiress of that Count d'Armaillé, who was the boast of Mademoiselle Mélanie's life, and that it had been George Dorrien's child who had died? Would not that account for Mademoiselle Mélanie's evident affection, otherwise inexplicable to Oliver, for her sister-in-law's daughter?

"It is all very hazy," he now thought, turning away from Mademoiselle Mélanie's door, and walking slowly back to his own lodging. "She does look more than eighteen. She is girlish enough sometimes, but sometimes, too, she is quite womanly. And Mr. Dorrien does not like her, that is certain, and that Mélanie is capable of any trick. I wonder the idea has never occurred to him. Such substitution would have been wonderfully easy. Well, if she be not a Dorrien, it will certainly be found out in the end, and then it will be all over—all over indeed!"

Even without any such catastrophe coming to pass, Oliver was much inclined to think that it was all over. He had committed a mistake, and he saw it. To win Antoinette's heart, was not to win with it the certainty of Mr. Dorrien's inheritance, and of John's position. Mr. Dorrien was a cool, not a doting grandfather, and Antoinette was getting quite unmanageable. She was charming, certainly, and Oliver liked her; but suppose she were the penniless niece of Mademoiselle Mélanie, he felt that it must be all

over. Something else he must try; that would never do. He sighed as he remembered how pretty she looked when setting out the pancakes; but he could bear it. If he had married Antoinette, he would have made her a very fair sort of husband. There was nothing cruel or actively unkind about him, and he had no strong hates; but he could slip off a love or a friendship much more easily than he could his gloves, which were always rather tight-fitting. He had never had but one genuine feeling in his life—his liking for his dead father. It was neither passionate nor deep, but it was true. As to Antoinette, she was charming, but so was blue-eyed Mademoiselle Basnage; and Antoinette had been growing troublesome and rather perverse of late. She had provoked him already, she would provoke him again ere he had reached the end of his journey. The wind had been with him up to the present, but it seemed to be veering now. A squall was coming, as sure as his name was Oliver Black. Whether it would originate in Antoinette's disobedience, or in her doubtful parentage, Oliver did not know; he only knew that it would be her doing, and that he would beware of her. Now suppose she were not Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter, how could Mademoiselle Basnage be brought into play? He stood still to cogitate awhile, but soon discarded the thought with a puff of the cigar he had lit on parting from Mademoiselle Mélanie. *Cui bono?* He was not a far-seeing schemer, by any means. Life was too uncertain, too changeful for deep-laid plots, thought Oliver Black. There was but one thing to do: never to lose a chance, and to be ready for any thing that might turn up.

A wide-reaching maxim, if ever there was one, and one admirably suited to men of this man's turn of mind.

CHAPTER XXXII.

When she closed the postern-door and stood in the garden, Antoinette did not move for several minutes. She was dreadfully frightened, and she knew it; and she also

knew that her very fear was it itself a danger. "I must be quite cool and quite calm," she said to herself, "for if I lose my presence of mind, why, I am simply undone. The first thing is to be sure that I am really alone."

It was not very likely that any one should be wandering in a dark garden on a dreary November night, for it was now past eleven; but in her present mood Antoinette thought all things probable, and she looked about her as anxiously as if she expected Mr. Dorrien or Mrs. Reginald to appear from behind every tree. No such vision came, however. The moon had long been gone, and heavy clouds obscured the sky. The garden was intensely dark. Antoinette heard the plash of the fountain, but caught no glimpse of its pale stone figure. She stole along on tiptoe, shivering with fear when the gravel creaked under her feet, but yet making her way to the house. When she came within view of the library-windows, she saw with a sinking heart that John's light was still burning. What should she do? Suppose that in the stillness of the night he heard her opening the door, and, coming out, caught her in the act of entering the house surreptitiously! What should she do then? What should she say? That she had gone out to take the air, at that hour, on such a night as this? John would never believe her, and she would have all the shame of a useless lie!

"I cannot risk it!" thought Antoinette, in the agony of her fear. "I will spend the night here rather than undergo so bitter and so deserved a humiliation."

For with fear there came to her that remorse which is born of danger. Going out, Antoinette had only felt that she was venturing on an escapade, sanctioned by her aunt's presence, and excused by her grandfather's tyranny. But coming in she felt guilty and penitent. Oh! it was wrong, very wrong indeed to go about so at night—so wrong that, come what might, she, Antoinette, would never do it again. For what had come of it? Cold pancakes, no pleasure, dreary business talk, and now shame and danger lying in wait for her behind that door which she would have given worlds never to have opened. In her fear she almost thought of spending the night in the garden, if, as she began to apprehend, John's vigil was to be prolonged into the small hours. At all events she could wait awhile,

and see if there was no chance of his retiring before she ventured on that dreadful door.

But nothing is harder in life, in things great or small, than to follow out a purpose. When Antoinette decided upon not venturing within until John had retired, she reckoned without the changes of the night. Before she had been a quarter of an hour in the garden, the clouds which obscured the sky had melted into heavy rain; before half an hour was over, she was wet through, and stood shivering in the unavailing shelter of the house-wall. She leaned against it vainly, cowering from the storm; but the wind, which drove the rain full in her face, also seemed to pierce her through, and with a feeling of despair Antoinette asked herself if she must spend the night thus.

At length John's light vanished. That little gleam, which had been so full of terror to her, suddenly left the grass, and the garden became as dark and cheerless as twelve o'clock, now striking far away, and a rainy night could make it. Antoinette lost no time. She stole on tiptoe to the door, and with a beating heart put in the key. It turned smoothly in the lock, but, alas! that door which, as she had ascertained, was never bolted, now resisted all her efforts. It was fast, evidently secured from within. The truth flashed across her mind. She had committed a fatal mistake. The door was not left unbolted, as she had foolishly thought. Only it was not yet secured when she looked at it at night, and it was unfastened when she saw it in the morning. "Then I must spend the night here," thought Antoinette, "and get in as best I may in the morning. I dare say I shall get my death of cold! Well, any thing is better than to be found out."

But even this dreary comfort was denied her. As she turned away from the door, wondering whether the river-god would afford her better shelter than the cold and bare house-wall, the library window was suddenly thrown open, and John Dorrien walked out with a swift, firm step, like one who has a purpose. He passed by her without seeing her. He was evidently going to the postern-door to make it safe. Antoinette's heart leaped with a sudden hope. Why should she not steal in through the opening he had left, and make her way to her own room undetected and unseen? In a moment she stood within the warm library,

which lamp and fire filled with comfort, and she was crossing it swiftly, when Carlo started up from where he lay curled on his master's bureau, and sprang toward her with a sharp and sudden bark, that soon changed into a glad whine of welcome. But the bark had been heard, and, before Antoinette had time to reach the door that opened on the landing, John Dorrien stood by her side.

"At last!" he said. "O Antoinette, never do that again—never! And you are wet through!—Do you want death, then, as well as destruction?"

He was very pale, and his white lips quivered with emotion. Antoinette heard him, and could not utter one word of reply. She felt she could have died with very shame. It was not merely her return that was detected, but her absence that had been perceived all along.

"I do wish I were dead!" she cried, clasping her hands above her head in a passion of despair. "O John, John, do not be hard upon me!"

He went and closed the window, then, coming back to her, he led her to the fire, and, taking off her wet cloak, made her sit down and dry herself.

"You are shivering," he said, pityingly, and forgetting his displeasure as he saw the plight she was in. "O Antoinette, never do that again!—never! never!"

He now spoke and looked so kindly that she felt instant relief. A while ago to be detected by him had seemed the hardest portion of her hard lot, and now she was so sure of his help and protection that she thought nothing of it. Of course he would not betray her, of course he would help her out of this danger, and of course, being so good and kind, her friend—had he not always said so?—he would forgive her folly and keep her counsel.

"John," she said, looking earnestly in his face, "I went to see my aunt Mélanie."

"Yes," he answered, looking at the fire, "I know you did."

She wondered in silent anguish what more he knew, but of this John said very little. He had to go out himself by the back-door, he remarked, and he had seen her with her aunt walking a few yards before him. It was not difficult for him to guess how she had gone out, and how she meant to come in. He had sat up for her, he added, but

she had tried the door so softly that the attempt had escaped his ear. "I am grieved that you should be so wet," he continued, regretfully; "but it never occurred to me that you would stay out in that rain. Was I not your friend, Antoinette?'

"O John, forgive me!" she entreated, "I shall never do it again—never!"

"Do not, for another time you might be detected, and that would be sad."

He said no more, put no questions, and he uttered no reproaches. That she should dry her wet feet seemed his chief thought.

"If you could have a fire in your room," he said, regretfully; "but that is impossible.—How you shiver! Wait a while, I shall bring you some wine."

He started up, and was gone before she could remonstrate.

"He does not believe me, or, at least, not half believe me," said Antoinette to her own sad heart; "and so while I was making pancakes for Oliver, and plotting against him, he was sitting up for me, and only wanted to save me from the snare I had run my foolish head into.—O Carlo, Carlo," she added, as the little fellow, still on the bureau, looked, with a whine, in her face, "you did well to give me up for him." But to be thus feelingly addressed was not Carlo's object. He wanted caresses, and, not getting these, he stretched out a paw, wherewith he scratched his former mistress's shoulder.

"Then you do like me after all," softly whispered Antoinette; "you do like me, Carlo."

She turned her face toward the dog, and in so doing her eye fell on a broad sheet of paper lying open before her. It was covered with lines, and bore the following heading, in a round hand:

"*Plan de l' Usine.*"

All that Oliver had told her about John's plans, all that he had urged her to find out, rushed back to her mind. Mechanically she stretched out her hand as if to take the paper, then drew it back with a sort of horror at the thought of paying back John's trusting kindness by treachery so

shameful. "Never, never!" she thought, turning back to the fire with a smile that seemed to defy the temptation.

Antoinette was still smiling and pacifying Carlo with a caress, when her color, which had returned a little, died away; she had heard Mr. Dorrien's voice in the hall addressing his young cousin.

"How late you sit up to-night, John!" he was saying. "Is there extra work?" Wild with fear, Antoinette did not wait to hear John's reply, but looked about her for means of escape. If the window had still been open she would have fled out once more into the dark night; but John had closed and fastened it. Quick as thought she flew across the room, and, opening the door of the next apartment, closed it again on herself, regardless of the sudden darkness which she thus entered. And it was well that she was so prompt, for, without giving John time to say a word, Mr. Dorrien opened the door of the library, and entered the room almost at the same moment that his granddaughter had taken refuge in the next.

"I thought you were out, sir," said John, when a look had told him, to his infinite relief, that Antoinette had escaped.

"No, my head ached; I staid within and fell asleep in my chair. You opened a door, John, and that woke me. What a good, bright fire you have! mine is out." Mr. Dorrien, who looked pale and ill, sat down in the chair which Antoinette had left vacant, and warmed his thin hands at the cheerful glow of the blazing wood.

"How is the paper-mill going on?" he asked, after a while, glancing at the sheet which had caught Antoinette's eye.

"Oh! very well indeed," replied John, with sudden animation. "Do you wish to hear any thing about it, sir?"

"Not to-night; I am not equal to it, John. Tell me, rather, how you are getting on with Miss Dorrien."

John stood facing his cousin. A sudden glow, which did not escape Mr. Dorrien's notice, overspread his countenance, but he answered quietly enough:

"Miss Dorrien has not been here long, sir."

"Come, John, that is not a straightforward answer," said Mr. Dorrien, a little impatiently, "and therefore not

such an answer as you should give me on this subject. I feel pretty certain," he added, with a touch of irony, "that you know how you stand in the young lady's favor."

John was silent awhile. When he spoke, it was with remarkable gravity of look and manner.

"I fear I have committed a mistake," he said—"I mean that Miss Dorrien and I are perhaps not suited to each other."

Mr. Dorrien looked annoyed.

"You ought to marry, John," he said; "you know what passed between us on that subject. I wish you had never taken that crotchet about Antoinette in your head. I wish she had never come here. I wanted you to see Mademoiselle Basnage. She is in Paris now—a charming girl, whose money would have been invaluable to us. Can you not see her, at least?"

"But, if I see Mademoiselle Basnage with that intention," replied John, smiling, "what becomes of the paper-mill?"

Mr. Dorrien did not answer at once. When he spoke at last, it was to say, rather dryly:

"Are you sure that Miss Dorrien and you will not suit?"

"No," replied John, hesitatingly, and involuntarily glancing toward the door of the next room, "I am not sure—I only fear."

"Time will show," said Mr. Dorrien, rising. "Good-night, John. Your fire has done me a world of good. Are you sitting up still?"

"Only for a little while longer," answered the young man.

Mr. Dorrien left him. John listened to his step going up-stairs, and thought how slow and heavy it was getting. Not till it ceased did he venture to open the door of the next room. He went to it, lamp in hand, but no token of Antoinette did he see. He called her softly, she did not answer. She was gone, evidently; but how had she escaped? A blast of wind, which stirred the curtains of a window looking on the court, and which nearly extinguished his lamp, made the mystery clear. Antoinette had gone out that way. He closed the window, crossed the library, and tried the front-door. It was ajar. Antoinette had evidently jumped down into the court, stolen up

the *perron* steps, and, opening the house-door, which had been left unbarred for Mr. Dorrien, made her way up-stairs to her room. If John could have doubted that such was the case, he was convinced of it when, going up to his own apartment, he saw a gleam of light coming out from beneath the threshold of Antoinette's chamber. With a sigh of relief he passed on.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Is she better?"

"Not much."

A pause; then Mrs. Reginald's voice resumed, dryly:

"A very odd cold, John. Very odd to leave one's window open, at this time of the year, and never find it out till the morning."

John did not answer. Mr. Dorrien's voice was heard below, and this brief dialogue, which took place on the stairs near the door of Antoinette's room, ended abruptly. But the door was ajar, and though both Mrs. Reginald and John spoke low, not a word escaped Antoinette's ear; she tossed restlessly in her bed, and turned her flushed face to the wall as Mrs. Reginald looked in at her to say kindly—

"Well, dear, do you want any thing more?"

"No, thank you," answered Antoinette, in a low tone, but without looking round.

"John sends you Carlo to keep you company," pursued Mrs. Reginald.

"John is very kind," said Antoinette, with a deep sigh; "but I do not think Carlo cares to be with me."

Carlo wagged his tail, as if in denial, and jumped up on the bed of his former mistress, favoring her so far as to lick her hands; then, lying by her side, he looked up in her face with a grave, wistful look.

"John is very fond of that little ball of white wool," resumed Mrs. Reginald, "and Carlo is very fond of John. We thought the creature would fret to death when John was away before you came."

Antoinette did not answer. She was evidently in no mood for conversation. Mrs. Reginald waited awhile, bustled about the room, stirred up the fire, put a chair in its place, then left the sick girl. She closed the door softly, and went down-stairs.

"I suppose she overheard me. Well, I do think it odd to leave one's window open on such a night as that was, and never find it out till one wakens up in a raging fever in the morning."

Chastisement rarely fails to tread in the very footsteps of our sins. So Antoinette had found it. In the first place, she was very ill; in the second, Mrs. Reginald's evident incredulity was so keen a sting to her young pride that she did not know how to bear it. "Péché caché est à moitié pardonné," says the French proverb, whether meaning that the absence of scandal really diminishes the heinousness of sin by not spreading its contagion, or because it intends to convey the low moral lesson that wickedness is essentially a matter of opinion, such we know was Oliver's theory; but Antoinette's conscience had never given full consent to the convenient doctrine. Yet impunity might have warped her moral sense, as it does that of so many others; and it was good for her that, though John saved her from the shame of discovery, he could not guard her against the bitterness of suspicion.

"Mrs. Reginald does not believe it," thought Antoinette, still tossing in her bed; "who would? Of course I did not leave my window open for the rain and damp to come in; of course she feels that I have told an untruth, and of course she suspects what the truth is. And John? John, who knows it, what must he think of me? John, who is so different from what I am."

Yes, John Dorrien was very different indeed from Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter. His life was pure, austere, self-denying, and open as the day. When she compared herself with him, and felt how mean a part she was playing, and how incapable he was of such baseness, she felt more than humbled—she felt taught. God's grace was so far with her still that she did not ask circumstances to bear the burden of her sins. She knew she could have acted differently. She also knew that she was not naturally base and ungenerous. Yet she had fallen so easily into

temptations that did not seem as if they could come near him. How and why was this, if it was not that John Dorrien had a higher standard than she had? John Dorrien was a very good young man, but he was by no means perfect. There were gleams of temper, of self-reliance, of love of approbation, of willfulness in John, which showed him to be one of sinning Adam's sons. Antoinette had seen all these traits in him, but she had seen also that, when it came to actions, it was impossible to suspect John of any not clear, open, and upright. A strength not all his own upheld him. It bore him through temptation and trial; and, with a woman's quickness of perception, Antoinette saw that too. Alas! why had she not got that strength? Oh! hard was the lot that ever denied rest, that cast her, most unwilling mariner, on stormy, adverse seas, and never let her reach that haven of peace whence John looked down at her with a pity so humiliating to modesty and pride. That sense of mortification and shame which his kindness had suspended, had awakened anew in the solitude of her sick-room. Antoinette could have groaned aloud in the bitterness of her regret and her abasement. Why had she done this? Why had she run such a dreadful risk? After all, Mademoiselle Mélanie could not compel her; Oliver Black, who so wished for secrecy, had no right to purchase it at her expense. Oh! why had she been so foolish? And on the question followed the fervent resolve never to run such a risk again, never to put herself in that terrible position.

Such thoughts as these do not make a day spent in a sick-room seem short. Sad and long was this day to Antoinette, even though toward its close Mrs. John Dorrien kindly came in to sit with her.

"Well, dear," said she, taking her post at Antoinette's bedside, and producing her work, with the evident intention of remaining—"well, dear, how do you feel now?—better? I am so glad. You have been poorly so long that it has made us all anxious. Did you like the books John sent you? He chose them himself; they are favorites of his."

Antoinette languidly replied that John was very kind, but that her head ached, and so she had not read the books.

"Headaches are cruel things," said Mrs. Dorrien. "I used to have dreadful headaches when John was a child. The dear little fellow was such a good nurse."

Her voice sank tenderly as she recalled her son's boyhood. Antoinette heaved a deep sigh, and said, despondently:

"I suppose John was always good. Some are, and some," she added, gloomily, "are always wicked."

"John was good," quietly said Mrs. Dorrien, "but he had a temper, and I was very strict with him. John is naturally too self-reliant and obstinate, and rather passionate, but he has a high sense of honor—he had it even as a child; and he never could do a mean thing—that saved him from many a fault; but I was very strict with John, though you would not think so now."

"Do you think it gave him much trouble to be good?" asked Antoinette.

"It would have given him more to be wicked," answered John's mother, with a shrewd smile; "but it did give him trouble to be good—it always does, my dear. I like neat sewing, and so, I dare say, do you, but it cannot be done without trouble."

"He is very clever—I mean, he knows a great many things—did that give him trouble too?"

"Of course it did. John was always ambitious, and he worked hard. Mr. Black, who is clever too, though not so much so as John, did not like work, and could not stay at the Abbé Véran's. Mr. Ryan, the English teacher, thought so much of dear John's poems, and they were so beautiful! There is nothing finer in Milton."

"John's poems! Oh, do let me see them!" cried Antoinette, eagerly. "Are they printed?—are—"

"Burned, my dear," interrupted Mrs. Dorrien, with plaintive earnestness. "When John felt that he must take to business, that he must fill his dear father's place in this house, and become Mr. Dorrien's support, he burned his poems that he was so proud of—he burned them with his own hand. The dear boy! I was lying ill in bed, as you are now, and he stood there, as it were, near the fireplace, and the light of the fire shone on this dear boy's face when I saw him thrust the packet into the fire. He laughed, but it tried him sorely, and I am sure that many a time after

that, when he was so grave for a lad of seventeen, he was thinking of his beautiful verses, and of the man he might have been. It was a great sacrifice, and," added Mrs. John Dorrien, with a voice that faltered slightly, then her dim eyes kindled, "it was a noble thing for a boy to do.

"He burned them?" repeated Antoinette, slowly. "John must have a very strong will."

"Yes, dear, he has; he seldom gives up what he has once set his mind on. That has given him great influence over Mr. Dorrien," added John's mother, with imprudent pride. "How flushed you are, dear!—are you better?"

"So much better," eagerly answered Antoinette. "Do you know, Mrs. Dorrien, I think I shall get up."

"Do, dear—John will be so glad to see you again," answered the fond mother, who, if one could hold a conversation with the sun, would have said as much to him about his getting up in the morning.

So Antoinette rose and dressed herself languidly, and, being alone, did not go down at once, but sat by the fire, and, looking at its dying embers, thought of John burning his poems. How hard he must be at heart!—how severe to be thus early capable of self-renunciation!—and, inevitable and galling conclusion, how he must despise her!

She leaned her cheek upon her hand, and looked round her room. It seemed very long ago since she had entered it first, and been rather wearied with John's praises, uttered by his mother's lips. On her table lay the little paper-weight, that exquisite toy which he had selected for her. Those Palissy vases were his choice, too. Hers had been, so far as he went, the tender welcome of a young betrothed in her new home. She felt it now, and remembered how it had offended her then—how scornful she had been of his presumption! Alas! she did not feel scornful as she brooded over the past; she only felt ashamed and humiliated. She did not want John's affection, but it was hard to lose his esteem, and deserve the loss.

A low whine broke on her sorrowful meditations. She looked, and saw Carlo, who had got tired of her company, scratching at the door to get out. John's voice, which was heard in the hall below, increased the dog's impatience, and his entreating whine became a loud and indignant bark of remonstrance.

"Oh! you may go," impatiently said Antoinette, opening the door for the dog—"go to that perfect John by all means, Carlo."

Carlo, quite indifferent to the scornful emphasis of her voice, trotted down-stairs, wagging his tail with pleasure at his release.

"I detest John!" thought Antoinette, with a sudden revulsion of feeling; "he takes every thing from me—even that poor little dog's liking. Yes, I detest him."

It was in this altered mood that she went down-stairs. The dinner hour was nigh, and Antoinette at once entered the sitting-room next the dining-room. She had a vague hope that she might find Oliver there, but in his stead she found Mrs. Reginald, who uttered an exclamation of pleased surprise on seeing her.

"Why, who would have thought it!" she cried. "I fancied you were going to keep your bed for a week yet."

Antoinette demurely replied that she was almost well—at least, much better.

"Yes, my dear," kindly said Mrs. Reginald. "You are better, I am happy to see it, and better you must keep."

"Oh! I am so much better," answered Antoinette, smiling, "and it does feel pleasant, Mrs. Reginald, to be down here again."

"Of course it does. Let me tell you that, among the pleasant things of life, home is one. And this is your home, dear; your grandfather's house to begin with, and—of course you know it—your own later, if you like it."

Antoinette's pale face became crimson, but she looked at her hands folded in her lap, and said not one word. Mrs. Reginald resumed:

"You see, my dear, young people think they know all about love and marriage, and the truth is, they do not. Now, if you went to market for a bird to put into a cage, which would you buy first, the cage or the bird?"

"The cage," answered Antoinette, after a moment's thought.

"Why so, dear?"

"Lest the bird should escape, Mrs. Reginald."

"Just so, and you would get a good cage with strong wires, and no weak places, such a cage as your bird could never get out of. Well, my dear, love is the bird, and mar-

riage is the cage. If you get your bird first, there are many chances that you will not have time to choose the right sort of cage to put him into, and so he may fly off with himself, and you will never catch him again. Whereas, if you provide yourself with a good strong cage, and put your bird into it, why, my dear, you must be very careless if he ever gets out."

Antoinette looked gravely in her face—then said:

"But what if I never get the bird to put into the cage, Mrs. Reginald?"

"Why, then, my dear," briskly replied the elder lady, "you will still have a good, first-rate cage for your money."

"A cage and no bird!" exclaimed Antoinette, looking somewhat dismayed.

"Yes, it is hard," said Mrs. Reginald, gazing at the fire, and speaking a little huskily, "it is hard to look at the empty cage, and to think, 'Oh! my bird, who was so bonny, and who sang so prettily once on a time, why did you fly away forever and ever, and leave me a poor, lone woman, for the world to laugh at?'"

She had reversed the case, but Antoinette did not remind her of it. She crept up gently to the spot where Mrs. Reginald was standing on the hearth, and stole her little soft hand within that lady's bony fingers. Mrs. Reginald was neither young nor beautiful, and it seemed strange that she should ever have thought of love as of an abiding guest, but she had a warm heart and keen feelings, and she had cast upon the faithless waters bread that had never returned to her outstretched hand.

"My goodness!" suddenly cried Mrs. Reginald, "I never thought about poor dear Mrs. John's jelly. Poor dear! poor dear! No jelly!"

And in a moment she was gone, leaving Antoinette standing alone on the hearth, looking down at the fire, and turning over Mrs. Reginald's parable.

"I caught my bird first," thought Antoinette, with a sigh, "and I left the cage to chance, and chance is not sending it, and it is weary work keeping a poor fluttering bird in one's hand all that time, especially when not a soul must know about it, when no one must ever hear it sing, or catch a blink of its little bright eye!"

Antoinette's own eyes, those soft, dark eyes which were

the charm of her young face, were dim at the thought. She had not time to linger over it. The door opened, and Oliver came in. He cast a swift look round the room, then came to her with open arms. Antoinette shrank from him with startled looks.

"Is any one there?" asked Oliver, in dumb show.

"No, no," she answered, audibly; "but, oh! Oliver, this must not last. I mean this fear of discovery. It would kill me."

"Dearest, you do not know how I have suffered," he answered, soothingly. "To know you ill, to guess that coming out to your aunt's had been the cause, and to be powerless, not even to be able to show the anxiety I felt —it was dreadful."

He spoke quite pathetically, and Antoinette held out her hand, and looked at him with kind, pitying eyes.

"Poor Oliver!" she softly whispered; "but we must never do it again—oh! never!"

"What! does any one suspect?" asked Oliver, with a suddenly anxious look.

"Suspect!" she echoed. "O Oliver, the door was locked, and—and it was John who let me in."

The shame of that moment seemed to live over again, and she buried her face in her hands as she thought of it. She could not see the sudden pallor which overspread the countenance of her lover as she made this disclosure.

"Well," he said at length; but by the time he spoke the word he had recovered his composure.

"Well," said Antoinette, looking up, "he had seen me with aunt in the street, it seems, and he actually sat up to let me in. He was very kind—he always is; he put no questions; he went to look for some wine for me, for I had waited in the garden till I was very wet; but, while he was away, I vowed from the bottom of my heart never more to run such a risk."

"Of course not," replied Oliver, wondering at her simplicity; for, of course, to commit the same imprudence over again was not to be thought of. "But where were you, darling, when he went to look for the wine?"

"In the library," answered Antoinette; "he found me out so: I was standing in the garden, and Carlo—"

"Confound the little beast!" interrupted Oliver, im-

patiently; "but that is not what I mean," he added, in another tone. "When you were in the library, dearest, I hope you made your opportunity good, and found out something about the paper-mill."

His eager black eyes were fastened on her face with a look so searching that Antoinette shrank before it. A strange feeling of fear came over her—a feeling that conquered even her indignation at the suggestion Oliver's question implied. At length she looked up, and said as bravely as she could:

"Do you mean that, while he was getting me wine to warm me, as I stood shivering, I should have searched among his papers for the information you wanted?"

"Yes," composedly answered Oliver, ignoring the resentful tone in which she spoke. "I do not suppose you could ever have a better opportunity than that."

"Oliver, how could I be so base?" asked Antoinette, in a low tone.

A flash, as of lightning, shot through Oliver Black's laughing eyes. Their pupils contracted, and their look became so fell that Antoinette's cheek blanched; but that look was so brief that she wondered if the changing firelight had not deceived her. Indeed, she might well put the question to herself. He laughed so pleasantly in her face, he looked so thoroughly amused.

"Why, dearest," said he, softly, "you cannot mean that such a foolish scruple would stop you?"

"Foolish!" she repeated, bewildered.

"Yes," said he, still laughing softly; "for where would be the harm?"

"Where?"

"Ay, where? I do not ask you to injure him, my darling. I only inflict one injury upon him, and that I cannot and will not repent."

"You need not," said she, with imprudent frankness; "he does not want me."

She knew nothing of men, this Antoinette. She did not realize the strange sad fact that a woman is never dearer to a man than when some other man seeks her.

"He has spoken to you," said Oliver, quickly.

"Oh! no; but I know it."

There was a pause. A step on the staircase warned

them to be careful. Antoinette took up a little hand-screen, and looked at the Chinese lady depicted thereon. Oliver admired the roses in a vase on the table. "Rare at this time of the year," he murmured, in the languid tones of a man of the world; but the bit of acting was not needful, the step passed by the door, and the pair were not interrupted.

"We must lose no more time," he resumed, in a cool, practical tone. "You may have other means of procuring information, which you will not object to; and of course you will avail yourself of them."

Antoinette was silent.

"You must," he insisted, not harshly, though very gravely; "our whole future now hangs on a few precarious chances, which we must seize. I have always heard that Fortune favors the brave—a saying which I read thus: That young flirt has a kindly feeling for venturesome spirits; she sits blindfolded on her wheel, and scatters her prizes right and left, seeming quite impartial, but she is not. She can peep through her bandage, and aim at some, while she leaves others by; and these 'some' are not, as a rule, the prudent, my dear, they are the audacious."

"And so that is your creed!" exclaimed Antoinette, in a low tone—"that is your creed, Oliver!"

"My dear," he coolly answered, "if you want dogma, and all that sort of thing, go to John Dorrien. He has them at his finger's ends—his Bible, his 'Fathers of the Church,' his 'Spiritual Combats and Gardens' encumber his table. I declare I admire him prodigiously. I can only get through the newspaper and a French novel now and then; yet he, wonderful young man, goes through them all, and attends to business as well!"

Antoinette heard him, and felt very heart-sick. She felt, too, that her love had embarked in a boat so light that it would soon be swamped by life's bitter waters, and she made a desperate effort to save it from final wreck.

"Do not, Oliver," she entreated, with something like pathos. "I cannot bear to hear you speak so."

"My dear girl, I will not," he said, with his pleasant smile. "I have no wish to worry you with my opinions. I am not at all like your pious people—I never tease any

one about these things. You will do me the justice to acknowledge that I have never interfered with you."

He said it so plausibly that she stared at him in amazement.

"But you told me there was no God!" cried Antoinette, with unpolished bluntness of speech.

Oliver looked horrified, and raised his handsome hands deprecatingly.

"Why, you little heathen," he said, "you don't mean to say you do not believe in what you call God, and I—well, let us say a first Great Cause. Of course there is something, only I contend that no one knows what that something is; and really I do not see any necessity for such knowledge. I can get on very comfortably without it."

Antoinette felt too miserable to answer him. Was this the love she had dreamed of—this terribly cynical talk, with a "darling" and a "dearest" here and there to sweeten its bitterness?

"O Oliver," she said, pitifully, "have you nothing else to say?"

Her look softened him.

"My dearest," he said, almost fondly, "what am I to say? We seem to be at cross-purposes. I want to have you, and I seek for the only means in my power. Lend me a helping hand, and all will go well, and we shall be as happy as the day is long. But remember that golden opportunities are scarce, and that it is a rare mercy if we have not been interrupted ten times, and that we are losing moments more precious than diamonds, in foolish talk. Let us at least agree on something. You have heard of Mr. Brown's Morghens, which I am to get accepted by the Museum of Saint-Ives? That is a very safe subject. Whenever I talk of them, *you* will know my meaning, though no one else can even guess it."

"I don't understand," said Antoinette, looking bewildered.

"Dearest, it is so easy. If I say 'I am disappointed about Mr. Brown's Morghens; I thought to get on better at Saint-Ives,' you will know there is a hitch. If, on the contrary, I praise Mr. Brown's Morghens, why, you will conclude that I am progressing, as I am sure to do, if you will but help me, you perverse darling."

"What am I to do?" asked Antoinette, with a wearied sigh.

"Oh! if I tell you it will be the old story. I want you to get me information concerning the paper-mill, that is all. It can injure no one," he added, emphatically—"no one, on my word, and it will really be rendering a great service to your grandfather."

Antoinette heard him out patiently; then, burying her face in her hands, she communed with her own heart.

"Shall I, or shall I not?" she thought. She was very weary; she longed for liberty, for love openly confessed, for something like happiness. And, after all, why should Oliver deceive her? Perhaps he did mean well, and that John was unconsciously rushing to ruin, and binding down her grandfather's house to some imprudent scheme pregnant with destruction. What if she were to yield, and please Oliver by making at least the effort, which was all he asked from her. She looked up. Her color came and went, her lips quivered.

"My darling," said he, taking both her hands in one of his, "you will do it—I know you will."

"I will die first!" said Antoinette, looking with a proud smile in his face; for youth, which thinks death so remote, is ever ready to brave it, and, even as he spoke, the baseness of the treason had risen before her in all its nakedness.

"Oh! very well," replied Oliver, with a resigned air, "I must think of something else. These are hot-house roses, of course," he added, carelessly, as the door opened, and Mrs. Reginald walked in.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Autumn had set in that year with the severity of winter. The end of October was chill and overcast, and November had borrowed the icy mantle of December, and wore it trimmed with a fringe of snow. To Antoinette, fresh from the south, where the roses blossom in the garden, and the

oranges ripen on the tree through all the winter months, the change was mournful and depressing. She looked despondingly at the dull and cloudy sky, shivered when she was asked to go out, and watched the fall of sleet and rain, intermingled with snow, with looks full of dreary wonder.

"There never was such a climate," she said to Mrs. Reginald; "it is all cold, or wet, or frost, or snow, and not a bit of sun."

Mrs. Reginald's only reply to this lament was the question:

"What had you in La Ruya?"

"Blue skies, sun, flowers—"

"I do not mean that," interrupted the elder lady; "I mean, what had you in La Ruya besides the climate?—not books, not museums, not picture-galleries, palaces, or fine churches—nothing, my dear, nothing to feed the mind. I would give all the blue skies, and all the flowers, for civilization."

Antoinette, who was sitting in the window of Mrs. Reginald's little *salon*, with her cheek resting on the palm of her hand, and her eyes fastened on the gray sky, dull, cloudless, and low, smiled and shook her head.

"You don't know La Ruya, Mrs. Reginald," said she, "or you would not speak so. I had a hundred pleasures there. You can't think how delightful it is to climb the mountain-side! There is a little torrent that has not even got a name, it is so little, and which has been made to flow in a narrow bed, like a canal, with a path on one side, and a green bank, covered with the loveliest flowers, on the other. I could just stretch out my hand across and gather such a heap of them!—lavender, thyme, mint, jasmine, poppies, scabious, wild-pinks, marjoram—and ferns, Mrs. Reginald; such ferns in the little rocky nooks!—hart's-tongue, maiden's-hair, asplenium, and others of which I don't know the names. And then to go there of an evening when the sun is set, and see the little moths flitting about in the gray lights, to look at the beautiful gauzy flies and splendid butterflies asleep on tufts of lavender in bloom. Bees, too, are very fond of lavender, and will buzz over it by the hour. And ants—do you like ants, Mrs. Reginald? I did so like to go to a narrow place where the water flowed

through some big trees, and watch the ants crossing over. What a mighty bridge it must have appeared to them! and how little the silly things seemed to guess that a wave not too big to fit in the hollow of my hand might have swamped them! And then the wild-strawberries, Mrs. Reginald—think of them, and of hunting for them, and seeing them shine, red as coral, from among the green leaves! And the storms—oh! the splendid storms we had in La Ruya, when the thunder rolled in the mountains, and one heard the stones falling down into the torrents! and then to see the mists come and go, and the loveliest white clouds lie asleep on the green mountain-side! O, Mrs. Reginald! it was all so delightful!"

"And all in the winter-time, too," pointedly said Mrs. Reginald, who had listened to this tirade very patiently—"poppies, ferns, bees, butterflies, and strawberries, from December to April?"

"Well, no," reluctantly acknowledged Antoinette, cooling down from her enthusiasm, "it was not in winter-time that La Ruya was so pleasant; but it was always pleasant—indeed it was."

"Of course it was," said Mrs. Reginald, rocking herself in her American chair—a habit to which she was prone—and looking up at the ceiling. "And is it not the old story, my dear—when we remember a face that we have loved, do we not always remember it at its best?—fresh, young, and blooming? When we remember a spot that has been dear to us, is it not always spring or summer there? There is no cheat like memory—none, and it is the only revenge which the poor dead Past can take against its insolent young rival, the living Present. Indeed, I look upon that hallucination, to which we are all subject, as the only way to solve many a mystery. For instance, it is the only rational explanation I can find for John's infatuation about Mr. Black. They were boys together, and John, so shrewd, so penetrating, sees his old playmate through the false, delusive prism of Memory. Poor John!" musingly added Mrs. Reginald, "to think that he should be so absurd!"

On hearing Oliver Black's name, Antoinette had changed color, but, when Mrs. Reginald came to this melancholy conclusion concerning John's absurdity, she started nervously to her feet, and said, with a sort of hurry:

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"Mrs. John has asked me for the pattern of a knitted scarf; I must go and give it to her while I think of it."

"Do," dryly replied Mrs. Reginald; and, keeping her eye fastened on the ceiling while Antoinette was leaving the room, she said to her own thoughts, "I do wonder what is on that girl's mind?"

Alas! there was a weight of care on the mind of Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter, and it was because she could not raise it that the Paris sky seemed so gloomy, and that La Ruya became as a lost paradise. "Oh! that I had never left it—that I had never come here!" she thought ten times a day. The net she had so foolishly entered was closing round her more and more, and while her freedom was inextricably caught in its meshes, love, alas! was slipping out through every loop-hole. She did not know it yet, for, when the heart is true, such knowledge is slow to come; but she did know that she dreaded the chance of seeing Oliver alone—that she shunned it as we shun what is dangerous and baleful, and that, when they met in the presence of others, his eye, however smiling his countenance might be, watched her with cold mistrust. And most justly was it so. The love that rests on falsehood and deceit carries within it the poison that dooms it to a death which may be sudden or lingering, but which is sure.

Careful though Antoinette had been to avoid anything resembling a private interview with her lover, she had neither shunned all intercourse with him, nor wished to do so. She had written to her aunt a few lines, half penitent and half afraid, in which she explained that Oliver was not to be angry if she could not do as he wished. And once, on the staircase of La Maison Dorrien, and another time in the drawing-room, when Mr. Dorrien gave a formal dinner, to which Oliver was asked, they had exchanged a few hurried words, which had filled Antoinette with terror, for the first time, Mrs. Reginald, suddenly coming out of her own apartment, had given the pair a sharp, inquiring look, and, the second time, she had met John's earnest eyes fastened on her with a long, reproachful gaze, or one, at least, which her conscience so construed. Ever since then the mere mention of Oliver's name by either Mrs. Reginald or John Dorrien had been to Antoinette a cause of alarm which she could not conquer, even though nothing had ever occurred

to justify its existence. It was therefore quite enough that Mrs. Reginald introduced this unwelcome topic on this November afternoon for Antoinette to hasten out of her presence in sudden fear, and to feel that she could not be too far out of the reach of her searching brown eye, or of her sharp, probing speech.

The trite wisdom which the ancients embodied in their celebrated saying, "From Charybdis to Scylla," never grows stale in the experience of daily life. That imaginary peril which Antoinette had left Mrs. Reginald's presence to shun met her at Mrs. Dorrien's door. Scarcely had she reached it, when Oliver Black appeared by her side. She looked at him mute and frightened. He gave a quick glance round, then whispered, "John is below," and aloud he added, "Such glorious news about Mr. Brown's Morghens, Miss Dorrien! You will be glad to hear them I know."

"Oh, yes," answered Antoinette, faintly, "but not now —I am in a hurry."

She hastily entered Mrs. Dorrien's apartment as she spoke, and was laughingly followed by Oliver.

"If you want to shun the Morghens news, Miss Dorrien," he coolly remarked, "you are, as it were, rushing into their very jaws. I am bringing them to Mrs. John."

Mrs. Dorrien rose to receive her visitors, and looked with some surprise at Antoinette's pale, alarmed face, and Oliver's half-defiant, half-amused countenance. She had no suspicion, and yet she saw in these two something which perplexed her.

"What is it?" she asked, almost sharply—"what has happened?"

But in a moment Oliver had charmed away her dawning mistrust. With his most winning smiles, in his most delightful manner, he had entered on the theme of Mr. Brown's Morghens, and made the pleasantest little romance out of them. Mrs. Dorrien heard him, and was enchanted. It was all so nice, and Mr. Brown would be so pleased, and Mr. Black had been so kind; but John—where was John? and why had he not come up with Mr. Black?

"John was busy," answered Oliver, covertly watching Antoinette, who all this time had been moving about the room, looking for worsteds, sorting the various colors, and

seeming intent upon the selection. Yet she had not missed a word that Oliver had spoken. What did it mean, or did it mean any thing? The girl's heart sank within her as she listened to him. His speech had a ring of triumph in it, but then she apprehended almost equally the success or the failure of the schemes in which he had involved her For did not success imply the ruin of John Dorrien, who had been so generous and so true, and was not failure the death-blow to all she had hoped in?

At length Oliver left, and she was released from the suspense in which his presence kept her.

"Such an amiable young man," murmured Mrs. Dorrien, "and so attached to my dear boy. It is to please John, you know, that he has taken all that trouble about Mr. Brown's Morghens. It is so nice to see two young men such fast friends as these are; but, then, John has been so kind to Mr. Black, and he knows it."

Not one word could Antoinette answer, but, turning almost deathly pale, she went up to the fireplace, and, standing on the hearth, looked down at the blazing logs. "He burned his verses here," she thought, "and that is his reward, treason—treason! Is it always so in life, I wonder? Are there some who sow, and others who reap?"

She pondered over the question, while Mrs. Dorrien went on with her small talk. It haunted her while she was knitting Mrs. Dorrien's scarf, and it was with her still as she sat at dinner next to John, and heard him laugh gayly —Mr. Dorrien and Mr. Brown were not present—at Mrs. Reginald's comments on the Morghens.

"Poor Mr. Brown," she said, pathetically. "I suppose he would have petrified if it were not for these Morghens. I suppose all men want something to keep them alive. With the young it is love or pleasure, or that sort of thing; and with the old it is Morghens, or medals, or autographs, or any other hobby."

"And the ladies, Mrs. Reginald," said John, "what have the ladies got to prevent them from petrifying?"

"Needlework, to be sure. Oh! you may laugh; it is a wonderful invention, for are there not stitching, back-stitching, felling, hemming, herring-boning, darning, and all the rest of it? There is nothing like needlework, John."

John laughed. How light-hearted and happy he seemed,

while she, miserable Antoinette, felt oppressed with care! The mere mention of the Morghens made her heart ache, and when, after dinner, Mrs. Reginald wanted her to join them in her sitting-room, she excused herself.

"My head aches," she answered, and on that plea she went up to her room. The weight of life was upon her, and it seemed more than she could bear. Depressed and weary, she sat down on a chair, and, clasping her hands above her head, she looked before her with sad eyes that saw not. Then, little by little, outward objects stole on her inward sense. The cold, waxed floor, the white bed, the toilet-table, with its oval mirror, in which the flickering light of her candle was reflected, grew upon her one by one, till she started to her feet in a sudden tremor: a little white note was lying on her table. She ran to it, and took it up with a beating heart. What evil, what sorrow were at hand, that he had written to her, and taken such means to convey the news which she had learned to dread?

She opened the letter of her lover with a trembling hand, read it, then colored violently with the suddenness of a great relief, and a great joy, for all Oliver Black had written was: "All's well. Good-by, darling, for a week."

A week's reprieve, a week's free, fearless life! Antoinette could have laughed aloud. Her dark eyes sparkled, she ran to her glass, she smoothed her hair, she settled the crimson knot in it, she smiled at herself; she felt light, buoyant, happy, and she never asked herself why she felt so. She took one or two turns round the room, came back to the glass, frowned to see that the crimson knot had got all wrong, made it all right again, then, gay and light as a bird, she slipped out of her room, and skipped down-stairs to Mrs. Reginald's door. There she paused, and even standing thus alone on the dark landing she hung her head, and felt shy and bashful, as she knocked softly and doubtfully, and heard John's voice reading aloud.

"Come in," said Mrs. Reginald's deep tones. Antoinette opened the door, and, with a coy look at the firelit group before her, said:

"Will you have me now, Mrs. Reginald."

She looked very pretty thus framed by the dark doorway, with the crimson ribbon in her hair, and the crimson knot on her breast. She half bent forward in the timid,

beseeching attitude of one who doubted her welcome, one hand holding the door open, the other half hidden in the folds of her dark silk dress. That soft, dainty grace which was her charm, was in her bearing and her aspect, and secured at once Mrs. Reginald's cordial greeting.

"Don't look so much like a little shy mouse, but come in," she said, kindly; "we'll not eat you."

"I hope not," replied Antoinette, with a low laugh. She closed the door and came forward, and John Dorrien met her half-way, and asked about her headache. Oh! it was gone, replied Antoinette, with her eyes averted, quite gone. She was quite well again. She took the low chair he gave her, and placed it nigh his mother, who greeted her kindly, and thence she looked up at Mrs. Reginald.

"My dear child," said that lady, tartly, "you need not look so frightened. I tell you we are not pussies going to devour you."

"I am not frightened—no, indeed I am not," said Antoinette; "and I came because I felt sure it was so nice here with you—and it is nice."

Her shy, dark eyes went round the room, so warm, so glowing, so pleasant with the wind and rain without, and within the wood-fire burning merrily on the hearth. Involuntarily, perhaps, she ended that brief survey with John Dorrien as he sat on the other side of the fireplace, leaning against the white-marble mantel-piece and looking down at her. He smiled as their eyes met.

"You do not know how snug we are here," he said, "or you would come oftener and join us."

"Yes, dear," put in Mrs. Dorrien, "I wonder you so often stay in your room of an evening. It must be so dull."

"She does not come because she is a perverse mouse," answered Mrs. Reginald; "don't contradict," she added, lifting up a bony forefinger and fastening her brown eye on the young girl's blushing face. "You are a fanciful, capricious mouse; deny if it you can!"

Antoinette neither denied nor got angry. She felt too happy for displeasure. She only bestowed one of her most winning smiles on Mrs. Reginald, and said softly:

"Well, am I not right to stay away if I feel naughty, Mrs. Reginald?"

"Then when you come you feel good," was the prompt rejoinder. "Well, my dear, all I can say is this: Goodness is very becoming to you, or it is the red ribbon in your hair."

"Oh! the red ribbon, by all means," said Antoinette, becoming very rosy at the little compliment Mrs. Reginald chose to pay her looks.

But Mrs. Reginald thought it was the goodness, and said so. She also thought she would put that goodness to the proof by making Antoinette useful. She accordingly gave her a tangled skein of thread to unravel, and bade John resume his book—a popular novel. John Dorrien had a musical voice, and read well. Antoinette felt in a delightfully dreamy mood as she divided her attention between her skein and his reading. Sometimes a subtile knot claimed all her mind and skill; and sometimes, letting the tangled threads lie on her lap, she looked at the fire, and listened to the reader, and felt that she might let life go by for a while, and allow the perplexities of her lot to drop out of her memory.

"Your mother has gone to sleep, John," said Mrs. Reginald, "you may put down the book. It is no great thing."

"Say you don't like novels, Mrs. Reginald," said John, as he put down the volume.

"I do like novels," answered Mrs. Reginald, decisively; "but they must be good, and there are one or two people in this story that I meet everywhere, and am tired of. I hate the mercenary young lady, and the loving one is a bore. As to the unattractive young man, so self-denying and so good, who falls in love with the beauty, and is trampled upon by her, he is my particular aversion. I prefer the villain, for, at least, no one expects me to like *him*."

"What, not like that good, unattractive young man, Mrs. Reginald?" said John.

"No," answered the lady, almost grimly; "I want to know what unfascinating people mean by falling in love with the fascinating ones, and why a man expects a girl to look over in his own case the want of those qualities which charm him in hers? The beauty is silly and heartless, and he loves her, and he actually wants her to love him, because he has both heart and sense! Why does he

not like a dull, plain girl," asked Mrs. Reginald, wi
short, scornful laugh, "so good, so sensible, eh?"

"The best thing would be a story without love,
Reginald."

"A story without love! I would not give a farthi
no, nor half a farthing—for a story without love," answ
the lady, warmly.

"And yet life has many thrilling and pathetic histor
began John.

"Pathetic nonsense," interrupted Mrs. Reginald; "
is no pathos without love. Don't interrupt me. I k
what you are going to say. Is there only one kin
love? But shall I tell you why that love is alway
love chosen?"

"Do, if you please."

"Because it is the most perfect of all loves, to be
Friends, brothers and sisters, parents and children, all
or may part; but man and woman, once bound by
must cleave to one another until death divides them.
dear boy, love is the only ideal here below, the only t
ing, says the marriage-service, which original sin coul
take away."

"But you are talking of marriage."

"Of course I am; and what is love but marriag
and what is marriage but love? Do you young th
think," said Mrs. Reginald, glancing from John Dor
on his side of the fireplace, to Antoinette, on her low
by her side—"do you think, I say, that an old woman
as I am gives up love when her hair turns gray? Do
think even that, if she happens to have been wreck
her day, she sits on the shore and rails at that sea w
once looked so beautiful and so tempting? No, no,"
tinued Mrs. Reginald, rocking herself in her chair,
looking at the fire, perhaps because her brown eye
dim, "one's outside and one's own hard lot have not
to do with the truth, and if the story be not a love-s
why, it is no story at all," added Mrs. Reginald, in
coolest and most matter-of-fact tone.

John Dorrien laughed gayly; his mother woke wi
little start, and Antoinette thought, "I wonder wha
thinks about love!"

"And is that the fashion after which you untang

skein?" cried Mrs. Reginald, a little indignantly, as she saw Antoinette toying with the thread on her lap.

The young girl started and blushed and stammered a little apology, and John Dorrien interfered.

"Allow me," said he; "I have a skill in unraveling."

"So you have," said Mrs. Reginald, shrewdly. "That boy would unravel any thing, my dear."

John Dorrien was taking the skein from Antoinette's hands. She quickly raised her eyes to his face, with a soft, inquiring look. Yes, she could believe that those brilliant gray eyes, so searching though so kind, could unravel the web of many a mystery.

"He knows all about me," she thought. "How little, how worthless I am! And he pities and forgives me, and cares no more about me than about the skein his hand is now taking from mine."

She was turning away with a throb of pain when he arrested her.

"Oh, but you must help me," he said. "I never could unravel alone so tangled a skein as is this."

"Then put your chair near hers, John," said Mrs. Reginald, a little impatiently, "and do not pull my skein about so, will you?"

"Let me hold it, dear," said Mrs. Dorrien, addressing Antoinette; "you look tired."

"I protest against your interfering, Mrs. John," peremptorily said Mrs. Reginald. "*You* look tired."

Well, Mrs. John thought she was tired, and rising, bade them good-night.

"And now, while you two work, I'll play," said Mrs. Reginald, leaning back in her chair and covering her face with her handkerchief.

She was soon fast asleep, and, save for her sound breathing and the crackling of the wood on the hearth, the room became silent. Antoinette held one end of the skein, while John Dorrien was unraveling the other end, and neither spoke.

"Antoinette," he said at length, "is there a new trouble on your mind—any thing I could help you in?"

He spoke low. She shook her head, and did not answer.

"Confide in me," he urged; and this time he spoke in a whisper.

Antoinette looked at the fire.

"I have nothing to say," she answered, with sad apathy. "I wish to forget, John. I came here this evening to be happy. Why will you not let me be so a little while?"

She looked up at him. Her eyes were dim, her lips quivered; there was a pitiful, appealing meaning in her face which would have moved a harder heart than that of John Dorrien. He stooped nearer to her and looked at her earnestly.

"Antoinette," he said, "I told you from the first that I was your friend—your only friend. Why would you not have faith in me?"

"Where is the use of faith, when one's life is as tangled as that skein?" she answered, with impatient bitterness.

"You could not unravel that skein alone," he said, quietly; "but I can do it for you."

She hung her head, and made him no reply.

"You are very dear to me," he continued, "and I should like to do for you what you do not seem as if you could do for yourself. How could you, when it is with mine that the skein of your life is so inextricably tangled! Have you never felt it? Have you never understood that, to cut asunder the threads which bind our two destinies, might be death to either, or to both?"

"What death?" she asked, under her breath.

"The death of faith, of hope—of more, Antoinette."

She could not help raising her eyes to his. Her heart was pierced with sorrow, and yet it throbbed with joy.

"I am his enemy," she thought—"his mortal enemy, and he sees it; and yet he is my friend—my dear, true friend, and I see it. Our fates are mingled, as he says—tangled together, so that it is death to divide them; and I would give the world that this had never been; and yet—yet I am glad that it is so."

Something of the passionate tumult in her heart appeared in her upraised face. She leaned back in her chair, forgetting the skein on her lap. John, too, let it lie there, and read her troubled countenance very intently.

"Trust in me," he said; and again his voice sank so low it was almost a whisper; "trust in me, and I will make it all right."

Antoinette did not answer; she felt bewitched and dreaming.

"Do not fear," he continued, soothingly; "fear nothing and no one, but when every thing looks black and threatening, remember that I am by."

She roused herself to say:

"But what if I am against you—against myself—what can you do to serve me, John?"

She spoke with sorrowful defiance, but he only smiled.

"I am a good swimmer," he said, "and if you capsize the boat, why, I must bear you to the shore."

"Do not," she replied, turning away with a great rush of grief coming up to her dark eyes; "if I feel myself sinking I shall cling to you as drowning people always do, and we shall both go down to the bottom, John," she added, trying to laugh.

"No, we shall not," he answered, almost sharply.

"Yes, we shall," said she; "therefore, when you feel tossed into the waves think of yourself, and let me sink or swim—whatever my lot may be, I shall have deserved it richly."

"Though you had deserved it ten times," said he, vehemently, "I would perish with you rather than forsake you."

She did not love him, nor did she think that he loved her, kind though was his language, kind though were his looks, but his generous friendship touched her heart to the quick. She longed to cling to him as to a brother, and to call out from the depths of her sorrowful heart, "O my friend, my friend, why did we not meet a year ago—when not a shadow need have come between our friendship?"

But she was mute; shame, pride, honor, another love kept her silent. He did not seem to require her language.

"You cannot get rid of me," said he; "we are in the same boat, you know, and sink or swim together. As to letting you go, or forsaking you in any fashion, do not think that I ever will."

She did not know how to construe his meaning. Was it that he would never forego his claim to her, or simply that, spite the mire of treachery and falsehood into which she had floundered, he would be true to her? "It must be that," thought Antoinette; "he would never steal another

man's love, nor take the second place when he should have the first. He knows I am getting myself into dreadful trouble, and he will be true to me, and he will marry Mademoiselle Basnage."

They sat thus in the faded fire-light glow, with its flickering light playing on their two faces; and the lamp stood behind them, and Mrs. Reginald, whom they had forgotten, was snoring in her chair. Antoinette felt languidly happy. It was pleasant to sit thus with John Dorrien, to know him so kind and true, and to be away for a little while from her trouble. That trouble would come back spite all his goodness—it would come back, oh! how well she knew it, but it was gone for the time being, and she knew that too.

"O John," she could not help saying, "you are so good, and your goodness does seem so to take care and trouble away!"

The light of the fervor with which she had spoken was still in her eyes, the smile her words had called up was still on his lips, her hand, which he had taken and pressed, was still clasped in his, when the door opened, and, without a word of warning, Oliver Black entered. He paused one moment, saw Antoinette's frightened eyes, and vain attempt to withdraw her hand which John forcibly detained, saw John Dorrien's undisturbed face looking round at him over his shoulder; then came forward with a smile on his lips, to which no gleam of light in his eyes answered.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Reginald," said he, as that lady woke up with a start at the sound of the closing door, "I feel this is a terrible piece of impertinence in me, but I have not one moment to spare; if I miss the 11.50 train," he drew out his watch and looked at it, "I am undone."

"And what have I to do with the 11.50 train?" tartly asked Mrs. Reginald, sitting up.

"Why, nothing; but this John Dorrien, whom I want urgently, is in your possession. It is a case of *habeas corpus*, if I may so say, and I want him. Lend him to me for five minutes only, and I promise to return him safe and sound."

He laid his hand on John Dorrien's shoulder as he spoke thus, never once looking at Antoinette, who, pale and scared, sat staring at him in mute appeal for mercy. John

Dorrien rose, his pleasant genial face unclouded, and he followed Oliver Black out of the room.

"I am afraid I interrupted you," said Oliver, coolly, as soon as the door had closed upon them, "for I believe you were actually making love to Miss Dorrien."

"Oh, no," quietly answered John; "we are good friends, but there is no love-making between us."

"And you were assuring her of your friendship when I came in?"

"My dear fellow, did you come back to catechise me about Miss Dorrien?"

Oliver Black tried to laugh, but he was ill at ease. He spoke no more of Antoinette; he talked, and at some length, of the business that had brought him back, but he could not do so with his usual careless manner. He was jealous, and Iago himself, had he been suffering from jealousy when he betrayed the Moor, could not have been self-possessed. At length he left. The two friends shook hands and parted at the head of the *perron*.

"The little traitress!" angrily thought Oliver, as he jumped into the cab that had brought him. "I know what to think of her now."

And John Dorrien, turning back into the library, thought, with a weary sigh, "Is that the skein I am to unravel?"

And Antoinette, in her room, thought, with a sort of dull despair, "I suppose it is all over now, and that I am really undone."

And Mrs. Reginald, putting on her nightcap, paused as she tied the strings, and thought: "There is something going all wrong—I know it; but, though I don't know a bit what it is, one thing I am sure of—that nasty little Mr. Black is at the bottom of it."

CHAPTER XXXV.

FORGETFULNESS is the happy gift of youth. Antoinette spent a sleepless night, and was depressed the next morning, but little by little she rallied, and in the afternoon she

was herself again; for, after all, what had she done that Oliver should be angry with her? Her conscience acquitted her of all save the feeling of relief at his absence, and how could she help that? Whatever he might think, Antoinette knew that she did not prefer John to him. She might lament that untowardness in her fate which had put her in the position of being false to so true and so sincere a friend as her cousin, but that regret was not liking —not the liking she had given, and still gave, to Oliver. And he, Oliver, was jealous; she had read it in his eyes, in his smile, in his whole aspect. Jealous of her!—poor Oliver, how little he knew her! Oh, if she could only tell him!—if she could only explain, and make all right!—if she could only assure him that, though she did not always obey him, she always loved him dearly, and never for a moment cared—in that way, at least—for any one else. But surely he must know that much, and if he did not—if he kept any bitter, painful doubt on his mind—surely, too, she would find it easy to set him right when he came back. And in the mean while Antoinette, with her conscience at rest, and her mind undisturbed by any apprehension for that present which is so much to the young, with her heart softened toward Oliver by the thought of his secret pain, Antoinette, we say, felt at ease again, and forgot that the sky of Paris was like lead, and that the November days were short and dull; indeed, as if to justify her oblivion of the latter fact, the day which followed Oliver's departure might have been borrowed from September, it was so bright, so clear, so mellow. The baleful fog had melted away, the heavy gray clouds had vanished, and a bright, warm sunshine shone in a sky of azure. The trees in the garden had not yet lost all their foliage, and their red and yellow leaves looked gorgeous in the golden light of early noon. Antoinette, looking at them from her window, felt light as a bird, and went to seek Mrs. Reginald in that lady's sitting-room.

"O Mrs. Reginald," said she, breaking in upon her, "the sun's shining, and the garden is so delightful! Will you not come down a bit?"

"Thank you, my dear, my store of rheumatism is already in. I am not like you, under the happy necessity of providing any for the future."

Antoinette was nettled. "I am sure I shall never have rheumatism," she said, almost indignantly.

"Now, I like that, it is such nonsense," exclaimed Mrs. Reginald, with emphatic approval. "Don't look cross, dear; I do like nonsense. I do consider it one of the necessities of existence. Nonsense—why, it is the most delightful thing in this world. Children, young people, lovers, and clever men and women, are full of it. Wise children are not to be endured. Wise young people and lovers, ditto, ditto. As to wise clever men and women, they are simply absurd. There never yet was genius without a grain of folly. Take my word for it, dear, we all wear the cap at the best of times, and we like, or ought to like, the music of our jingling bells. 'Tis only fools—because they are born to it—that never know what sort of head-gear adorns them, and they look so solemn and so grave under it that half the time the world does not find them out."

"Then don't be too wise, Mrs. Reginald," gayly said Antoinette, "and come down to the garden with me."

But, spite her love of paradox, Mrs. Reginald was not inclined to perpetrate this particular piece of folly, and Antoinette had to go down and get in her store of rheumatism alone. There was a quiet charm about this little bit of green, of sunshine and blue sky, set in the stony heart of the great city, and Antoinette stood still to enjoy it and look around her.

The early frosts had nipped the last flowers, but a hardy green plant still spread its wide leaves round the edge and down the sides of a gray stone-vase, and the river-god looked warm and benignant in the pale, yellow sunlight. A brown sparrow hopped fearlessly in the path before Antoinette, and picked up the crumbs which she had brought down to feed it. Withered leaves, which had fallen since the gardener had raked the alleys, were lying on the ground and crackled beneath the young girl's feet as she walked on. One lighted on her dark head, rested in the plaits of her hair—for she had recklessly gone down bareheaded—and, lying there, seemed the *memento mori* of Nature's sad autumn to her youth's joyous spring.

For she felt happy, very happy. Nothing could check the feeling just then. It rose buoyant in her heart, as the waters in that fountain which the old navigators sought

may have welled in the island lying in unknown seas, and never discovered yet by man. That November sunbeam which had pierced the autumn sky was as potent as an enchanter's wand over the southern girl. Fear and doubt fled, and even conscience was silenced, and she was so glad that she felt really good.

So she walked on, feeding not one sparrow, but a whole bevy by this, and softly singing to herself the refrain of an old Provençal song, a far-away echo from the days of the troubadours.

"My dear," said a voice behind her, "how can you be so imprudent? Remember that this is November. You will take cold, or have toothache. John would be so vexed."

So spoke Mrs. Dorrien, in a tone of maternal solicitude. She had seen Antoinette walking bareheaded in the garden, and had come down to remonstrate. The young girl turned round, and, laughing, showed two rows of white teeth that feared nothing as yet from that ache against which we have the authority of Shakespeare himself for saying that no philosopher's patience is proof.

"Thank you, Mrs. John," said she; "but I am so used to go about bareheaded that—"

"Not in this climate," authoritatively interrupted Mrs. Dorrien, producing a dainty white woolen hood and cape, and putting it on Antoinette's head, and tying it under her chin.

Miss Dorrien submitted with a resigned air, and the operation was not over when an "O little mother, how can you?" most reproachfully uttered, made them both look round.

John Dorrien stood by them with a look of concern on his pleasant face.

"How can you be so imprudent?" he said. "Antoinette, who is young and strong, may venture out on this treacherous sunny day, but that you, who are so susceptible, should do such a thing, is really too bad."

Antoinette laughed gayly at seeing the tables thus turned on Mrs. Dorrien, while that lady proceeded to explain how she had been drawn down by the sight of Antoinette's delinquency; but, before she had gone through half her justification, she broke off, saying:

"My dear boy, you have had some annoyance this morning."

Antoinette looked quickly up into John's face, and saw that it was grave and clouded.

"It is only a vexation, mother," he answered, with a wearied sigh, for Vexation had been a daily visitor of late, and John was getting tired of looking in her peevish face.

"Only a vexation," repeated his mother, still anxious, while Antoinette's heart beat at the thought that Oliver might have something to do with this. "What kind of a vexation, my dear boy? Is it something you may talk of?" she added, trying to smile. "Tell us about it, dear, if you can."

"There is not much to tell, little mother. You have heard me talk of Verney?"

"Oh! yes, that clever fellow—that genius!" exclaimed Mrs. John Dorrien, suddenly interested.

"Well, then, he has just left us, without a word of warning."

Mrs. Dorrien's face fell.

"And that is a vexation!" she said.

"Worse—it is a real trouble. We have large and pressing orders for New York. Even with him to work for us, we had no time to lose, not a day, not an hour. Without him, we may consider our orders as good as lost."

"But how did he come to do such a thing?" asked Mrs. Dorrien, with a face full of concern. "Had he no engagement with you? Can you not make him keep to it, or get him punished?"

"When we know where he is, we can certainly inflict some punishment upon him," answered John; "but by that time, little mother, where will our orders be?"

"Oh dear! oh dear!" she said, with a sigh, "what a worry all this must be to you, my dear boy! I suppose some one must have tempted him away?"

"Oh! yes," carelessly answered John, "there are plenty of people ready to take this thing up. I never thought we could keep it long to ourselves; but, while it was ours only, it was all clear gain—now we have got a check, for we lose time, and others will try to step into our shoes."

"But who can have done it?" said Mrs. Dorrien.

"I fancy Monsieur Basnage had a hand in it," replied John. "He may have other customers who would like Verney."

"Monsieur Basnage!" exclaimed Mrs. Dorrien, in a voice full of dismay. "How shameful! But I thought he was a friend of the firm. How or why did he do such a thing, John?"

"Oh! because we are not in his good graces just now," answered John, laughing. "I believe the fault is mine. You must not be so amazed, little mother, it is all in the way of business, and we cannot tax him with it, and it may not be true, either; but I must go and give Mr. Dorrien this piece of news, so good-morning, little mother."

Antoinette's gladness was all gone. She looked after him with troubled eyes. Had she any share in this mishap? Was it because Monsieur Basnage had found out any thing about the paper-mill, or because John had refused to see his daughter, that he had played such an unkindly trick on his old business friends?

"Mrs. John," said she, suddenly addressing her companion, "what was it this wonderful and wicked Verney did for John?"

"My dear, he did all the vignettes," answered Mrs. John, dolefully, "those pretty devices and emblems that you have seen on our note-paper. Oh! it is a very sad affair, and it all falls on my poor boy."

"And is that all?" exclaimed Antoinette, opening her eyes very wide. "Is it no more than that?"

"No more!" echoed Mrs. Dorrien, almost offended; "and is it not plenty? Did you not hear John saying that the firm will lose the orders for New York?—and do you know what loss means for such a firm as ours? Why, thousands upon thousands, my dear," added Mrs. Dorrien, straightening herself up.

"But surely some one else could be found to do that work in his stead," ejaculated Antoinette.

"Oh! of course, with time; but don't you see, dear, that it must be good work, well done, and at once—at once—and this is a branch peculiar to us. Dear John started it. No one else has taken it up, and the men who could fill that horrid Verney's place are not ready yet. It is a great trouble to my dear boy, I am sure."

Antoinette was silent, and looked very thoughtful. She said not a word as they entered the house, and went upstairs; and when she spoke at Mrs. Dorrien's door, it was to excuse herself from entering that lady's apartment. Mrs. Dorrien put on a resigned air, her victim air, but Antoinette did not relent, and repaired to her own room. All she did there was to take a little Russia-leather pocket-book from the drawer of her work-table. She did not venture to look at its contents, lest her heart should fail her, but, slipping it into her pocket, she stole down-stairs as stealthily as if she were bent on some guilty errand, and, pausing at the door of the library, knocked so softly, that no one, it seemed to her, could hear that timid petition for admittance. But she had been heard, for John's voice at once said, "Come in," and Antoinette, obeying the summons, found herself in the presence not merely of John, but of Mr. Dorrien. A smile of welcome broke over her cousin's face as he saw her, but her grandfather put on an air so remote, that Antoinette stood mute and abashed before the two.

"I am very sorry," she stammered, "but I thought John was disengaged, and could spare a few moments."

"Certainly," replied John, "as soon as—"

But Mr. Dorrien, waving his hand, said, a little dryly:

"This evening, when he is disengaged, John will be very happy to attend to you, my dear."

"I came upon business," said Antoinette, gravely, for opposition at once rendered her fearless.

Mr. Dorrien stared as much as a courteous man can stare at a lady, even though she should happen to be his granddaughter, then more dryly than before:

"Indeed! I hope I do not interfere."

"Oh, no," said Antoinette, blushing at his pointed tone, but casting a rather imploring look at John, who immediately said, in his kindest voice:

"What business is it? What can I do for you?"

"Oh, nothing," she quickly replied, "but I hoped I could do something for you, John. When you showed me the designs for the papers the other day, I amused myself with drawing some; if they could be of any use, I should be so glad," she added, hesitatingly.

Mr. Dorrien raised his eyebrows.

"You mean well, my dear," he began, "but you had better wait till another day, when John is more at leisure."

"Oh, but I have them in my pocket-book," persisted Antoinette, taking the Russia-leather-bound book from her pocket.

John said nothing, but held out his hand. Antoinette showed him the page on which she had sketched her designs, and watched his face anxiously. John uttered not a word, but handed the book to Mr. Dorrien, who, taking out his eye-glass, surveyed his granddaughter's drawings with a slow, critical gaze.

They were very finely and very skillfully drawn, some in Indian-ink, and some in water-colors. The first that met his eye was the demure face of his gray Angora cat, with a pink ribbon tied round her neck, and falling in a graceful bow on her milk-white breast. This little oval portrait of feline loveliness appeared as if framed in an elegant gold locket, and was an excellent likeness. Minette's furry ears, whiskers, and little white nose and forehead, were true to the life, and elicited a murmur of admiration from Mr. Dorrien.

"Very good—very clever, really," he could not help saying.

"And original," put in John.

"Decidedly original. And so is this."

The drawing which Mr. Dorrien commended was on the same small scale as the first. It represented a dragon-fly, with gauze-like wings of blue and silver, and long, thin body, hovering over some tall reeds. Mr. Dorrien liked this, but preferred Minette. "And what is this? A parrot! On my word, very clever, very clever!"

Polly stood on her perch, her red head turned on one side, parrot-fashion. Her black eye seemed to be looking at you curiously, and there was a meaning in her black hooked bill and tenacious black claws. Antoinette had lavished the richest colors in her palette on this tropical bird, her breast was of the brightest green and gold, crimson and azure, mingled on her wings and long tail.

"A handsome bird decidedly!" said Mr. Dorrien, smiling. "Ah! Minette again."

Yes, this was Minette again, but in another attitude.

Minette lying at languid length on her red-velvet cushion, her outstretched paw toying gracefully with a letter.

"Why, you little satirist," remarked Mr. Dorrien, directing his eye-glass on Antoinette's laughing and blushing face, "you do not mean to say that such is the fashion after which Minette serves my papers! Well, I suppose she does. But why have you not given us Carlo?"

Antoinette informed him that he would find Carlo on the next page; and so he did, and there was Carlo with a coat on; and a J. D. in scarlet upon it, and carrying a letter with a red seal in his mouth. A beehive, one of those pretty little lady-birds which the French call *bête à bon Dieu*, and a butterfly, completed the collection of Antoinette's drawings.

"On my word I am surprised," said Mr. Dorrien, putting down the book and removing his eye-glasses; "why, my dear, where did you learn drawing?"

"I studied it with Isabella Clarke at La Ruya," answered Antoinette.

"And to some purpose, really. I am surprised, and I'm sure so are you, John."

"Indeed I am, sir; I had no suspicion that Miss Dorrien drew so well, and could adapt her talent so ingeniously to our special purpose."

"But are these drawings really available?" asked Mr. Dorrien, doubtfully.

He looked at John evidently quite ready to welcome or discard Antoinette's efforts at her cousin's bidding. She felt this, and looked at the young man with anxious eyes.

"Verney never did any thing half so original and elegant," very decisively answered John. Antoinette's face brightened. "Only," he paused to give Carlo's image another look, and Antoinette's face fell—"only there are not enough of them for our purpose."

"Oh! but I can do more—plenty!" cried Antoinette, clapping her hands and her dark eyes sparkling. "How many do you want, John?"

"A dozen more by the end of the week," he answered, unhesitatingly. "You see we want all our time for engravers and printers: besides, some of these must be coiored by hand—"

"Oh! but I can do them," interrupted Antoinette, still

eager and enthusiastic—"I mean the dozen; only I had better lose no time, I suppose."

She looked from one to the other, and Mr. Dorrien again looked at John, as if referring the matter to him.

"Well, if you will try," said he, "I can set these going. Even though you should not succeed for this particular purpose, the drawings are too pretty not to be useful to us."

"And is there really nothing to mend or alter in them?" inquired Mr. Dorrien.

"It would be a pity to touch them," answered John.

"May I have them?" he asked, looking at Antoinette.

Her only answer was to take up a paper-knife, cut out the pages on which she had drawn her little sketches, and hand them to him with a happy, blushing face.

Mr. Dorrien, smiling at the pair with the look of a stage father rather bored with his part, supposed they might like to consult together, and having himself other matters to attend to, so left them.

"O John!" cried Antoinette, as soon as the door had fairly closed upon her grandfather, "what shall the next be?"

"Don't ask me; I have no genius that way—and excuse me if I leave you awhile; I must go to the store-rooms."

She remained alone in that grave sanctuary, once devoted to books, study, and calm ease, and now consecrated to dry business letters, to heavy cares and feverish anxiety. She looked at the papers scattered on the table, some of them covered with columns of figures; from these she glanced up to the bronze figure of Polymnia, with her clear Greek face and meditative gaze. Poor John! This was what he had once aspired to, and had given up—the loveliness and delightful variety of poesy; this was what he had got in exchange, and was tied down to—a task both arid and uncongenial, and, as it seemed to Antoinette, full of terrible sameness.

"Well," said John, coming in and breaking in upon her meditations, "what brilliant idea has come to you, Miss Dorrien?"

"O John! I was not thinking of that; I was thinking of you, and what a hard, hard life you lead."

There was a moment's silence. Her eyes were fastened on his face, which became suddenly grave. John rarely

spoke of himself; his feelings, his opinions, he guarded with quiet reticence. He seldom complained of life or its accidents; he never alluded, even remotely, to the past which he had forsaken, he did not deplore the future which lay before him. If "Miriam" ever rose from her ashes, she was visible to no eyes save his. What he thought now of the poem he had ruthlessly burned, or if he ever thought about it, even his own mother knew not; and, though that subject was in Antoinette's thoughts just then, she did not dare to allude to it—for, after all, John had never taken her into his confidence; he had never even attempted to convert her from her skepticism by expounding to her his own religious hopes and belief. He had been reserved, though not unkindly so.

"What makes you think that mine is a hard life?" he asked, after a pause.

"You have so many cares, John."

"Every one has cares, and I have mine—but I have my reward, too. A firm like this is like a good ship, of which it is dangerous and honorable to be the captain. It is a hard life—yes; but your true sailor does not care for the shore—and now what of the drawings?"

He was quite the man of business, and Antoinette could not help perceiving that, though John in the library was kind, he was not like John in Mrs. Reginald's sitting-room. She felt a little abashed, and as if she had taken a freedom; but, rallying, she said—

"Would you like a windmill, John?"

John's eyes sparkled at the suggestion.

"A windmill! Splendid! How could you think of such a thing?"

Antoinette smiled demurely.

"I have been reading Don Quixote," she said, "and there is a print of a windmill in the book which I can use—for, you know, John, I could not draw a windmill from memory or imagination."

"Of course not. Any thing else?"

Antoinette, who was rubbing the paper-knife thoughtfully along her smooth cheek, was silent awhile, then remarked gravely:

"John, I should like a lobster—a red, boiled one, you know."

John could not help laughing, but accepted the lobster, though not holding it equal to the windmill.

"Then I shall go and ask Mrs. Reginald to get me a model," said Antoinette, much pleased at her success; "and when I have other ideas, may I come and tell them to you, John?"

She spoke hesitatingly, as if doubtful of her welcome.

"Surely you know you may," he answered a little reproachfully.

A bright smile thanked him, and with a nod Antoinette opened the door, and was gone. She ran up at once to Mrs. Reginald's room, and entered it breathlessly.

"O Mrs. Reginald, I want a lobster," she cried—"I mean at once—pray do send out for one immediately. I have no time to lose."

"So hungry as all that?" exclaimed Mrs. Reginald, raising her eyebrows.

"O Mrs. Reginald, how could you think I wanted to eat it? I hate lobster! It is for a drawing." And forthwith followed the explanation, which amused and interested Mrs. Reginald greatly. She entered into the spirit of the thing with her usual freshness and vigor. She sent out, not for one lobster, but for three, that Antoinette might be sure of a suitable model. She would make her draw in her sitring-room, because hers, she maintained, was the best light in the house. She brought out a portfolio, in which she kept woodcuts, prints, and other scraps, in the hope of assisting Antoinette's conceptions: and, in short, she was so much charmed with this new hobby, and so wrapped up in it, that she forgot her customary afternoon visit to dear Mrs. John.

Dear Mrs. John, surprised at her solitude, came down to see what had caused it, and found Antoinette looking meditatively at three lobsters in different positions, and Mrs. Reginald looking at Antoinette with her head on one side, a smile on her brown face, and her hands behind her back.

"My dear creature," she cried, enthusiastically, "I have such a piece of news for you! Only think—don't touch one of these lobsters, for goodness' sake; they are as sacred as if they were Egyptian divinities—only think, this brown-

headed little girl is a genius, and John has found it out, like a clever boy as he is; and don't tell me that Mademoiselle Basnage ever could have made any thing out of a lobster."

Antoinette could not help laughing, partly at Mrs. Dorrien's amazed face, partly at Mrs. Reginald's tone of triumph; but she had no time to spare, and left the task of explanation to her zealous adherent.

Mrs. Dorrien was pleased, but she was a little affronted too. She had been vexing herself with John's trouble ever since, and no one had come to tell her that the trouble was over; and so, though she praised Antoinette, and expressed herself delighted, she could not help taking the absent Mademoiselle Basnage's part. How could Mrs. Reginald know that Mademoiselle Basnage, who was said to be so clever and accomplished, could have made nothing out of a lobster in such an emergency as this?

"Don't tell me that she could or would," persisted Mrs. Reginald, in her most obstinate tone. "Don't I know what girls reared after a pattern turn out?—never an idea of their own. When you see one you see twenty, all dolls —and what can dolls be but dollish?"

Nothing could be clearer than this, and Mrs. Dorrien, having uttered her little protest, submitted, and, leaning back in her chair, thence looked at Antoinette's bending and intent face, and supposed that, now that she and John were making such progress in their intimacy, the real courtship would soon begin, and then the wedding would come, and preliminary—most important in Mrs. Dorrien's opinion—the partnership.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE three days that followed were very delightful days to Antoinette. For the first time in her life, she tasted the sweetness of toil and usefulness. Up to the present her labors had been desultory and fitful, and whatever pleasure she might find in her tasks had been tempered

by the feeling that the world would be none the worse off if she left them unaccomplished. But now, what a difference! Now John, now Mr. Dorrien, now La Maison Dorrien actually wanted her, and were all the better for the fancy which she possessed, and the culture she had given it. That the form of art to which she now devoted her thoughts sleeping and waking, for she dreamed about her vignettes, was a very little form of art indeed, luckily did not trouble Antoinette. She did her best, and nothing for which the best is done can be really poor or mean. And so she worked on, and her work was useful and prized, and Mrs. Reginald petted, and John praised, and even Mr. Dorrien admired her, and eleven designs—not of equal merit or originality, John was obliged to admit that, but all available—had been produced by Antoinette, and were being engraved, printed, and colored, and only the twelfth was wanting, when she came down early one morning, and entered the library, where John had been working long before daylight had filled the gray court.

"Well," said he, quickly reading the perplexed meaning of her face, "what is it now?"

"I have had a dream," said Antoinette, sitting down and looking earnestly at him—"a very odd dream, John. May I tell it to you?"

"Certainly."

"It was about the vignettes—I dream about them every night," added Antoinette, with so much seriousness that John bit his lip not to laugh. "Well, I dreamed about them last night. I thought I was in my room in La Ruya, not here, sitting by the open window, and listening to the young swallows twittering in their nest above my head under the eaves of the roof, and as I listened I thought 'Oh, what shall I do for a twelfth design? I must have another, you know, and I can't get one.' Then I thought of all sorts of things—a fern—but I have done it—a sprig of sea-weed—but we have that too—in short, I could find nothing new, when the swallow, leaving her nest, flew down and lighted on the bar of my little wooden balcony, and began to sing. It was a very pretty little song, and she looked at me all the time, and clapped her long wings every now and then, and turned up her bright eye, and opened her bill, and all as if she were a nightingale, till I lost patience, and told

her to be quiet. 'Nonsense,' she answered, nodding at me, 'I sing beautifully, to begin with; and then I am the very person you want, for you are thinking of America, and I am going there this moment with a message of good-will, and I am to bring back another message from the president of our friends, the birds, over the water, and look,' said she. So she opened her wings and flew away, and all at once it flashed upon me, as I saw her flying with her pretty, dark wings outspread, and her silvery breast shining in the morning sun, that she was indeed the very person I wanted, and that I could never get a prettier design to head a letter than a swallow flying."

"Never, never, indeed!" cried John, delighted. "O Antoinette, I am much mistaken if your swallow does not go from one world's end to the other with her message of good-will."

But Antoinette, who ought to have looked charmed at his warm approval, only hung her head, and said, despondently:

"I am so sorry, John. I can't draw a swallow. I tried ever so often, as soon as I woke, and I can't draw the pretty bird flying; and a stuffed one would not do for a model."

"But I can get some one to draw it," promptly answered John; "any thing, every thing can be had for money in this wonderful Paris; and men who can draw swallows flying are as plentiful as cherries."

"Then you could have got plenty of people to do my vignettes," said Antoinette, coloring up.

"No, no," he promptly responded; "I can get plenty of clever hands to execute, but the fanciful minds to conceive, though they are to be had, are not so easily and so quickly found." With this Antoinette had to be satisfied. It would have been more gratifying, to be sure, if she could have drawn her swallow on the wing; but, as this was a feat beyond her power of accomplishment, she allowed herself to be comforted by John's smiling reminder that it was not every one who could dream to such good purpose as she did.

This swallow, which sent Mrs. Reginald into ecstasies, was the end of Antoinette's labors for some time.

"Don't draw too much on your fancy, my dear," said the shrewd lady. "Fancy is simply the most capricious

and wayward of will-of-the-wisps. It is amenable to no rule, and obeys no law. So don't frighten yours away by making it work too hard, or you will find that in the hour of need it will forsake you utterly. Improve yourself in drawing—that is work; and let Fancy take a nod till you want her."

As John echoed this wise advice, Antoinette had nothing to do but to obey. She did so with all the more docility that she took the deepest interest in the bringing forth of her designs under that form of note-paper and envelopes to match, which was to render them available for the purposes of La Maison Dorrien. Nothing, indeed, could exceed her pleasure when John Dorrien placed in her hand a little packet, containing samples, printed, colored, glossy, highly pressed, and, to Antoinette's eyes, miracles of art, of her twelve vignettes.

"And now, John, how are you going to settle accounts with that child?" asked Mrs. Reginald, when this little ceremony took place in her sitting-room on the evening that saw the swallow depart for the journey across the Atlantic, "for you will surely not be so shabby as to take her labor for nothing."

"Certainly not," promptly answered John. "I am authorized by Mr. Dorrien himself to place at Miss Dorrien's disposal a check for the full amount which would have been due to the faithless Verney."

"You don't mean it!" cried Antoinette, coloring up with delight and surprise.

A check, which John Dorrien put into her hand, was his only answer. She laughed joyously, looking from John to Mrs. Reginald.

"And have I really earned all that money?" she said; "and can I really do what I like with it?"

"To be sure you can," he answered, smiling at the childish earnestness with which she put the question. But even as he spoke her face fell. The happy pride vanished from her smile, the gladness left her eyes. Her first thought had been to make a present to Mademoiselle Mélanie of her earnings; but, when she remembered how her aunt hated John Dorrien, how Oliver and she were plotting against him, and doing their best to make her, Antoinette, abet them, she hated with all the might of an honest heart

to apply thus the money which, after all, she owed, and she knew it, to John's kindness.

"No," said she, looking up into his face with a sudden dimness in her bright eyes—"no, John. If I can have obliged you, I shall be glad; but there shall be no money between us—none. Money," she added, in a tone full of sorrow—"I hate it—it is the cause of every misery, of every trouble. I wish there had never been any—never! never!"

And, so saying, she let the check drop from her hand. It fluttered into the fireplace near which she was standing, a flame caught it, and in a moment it had shriveled up into a little thin, transparent scroll.

John was silent. He had heard the remorseful ring in Antoinette's tone, and he half guessed its meaning. Mrs. Reginald, however, raised her eyebrows, and lost no time in uttering an indignant protest against Antoinette's philosophy.

"Was there ever such a little sentimental puss!" she cried. "No money! Why, you ninny, if there were no money, what would there be?—no grand cathedrals, no palaces, no museums, no pictures, no poems, no books, no expeditions to the arctic pole, no African missionaries, nothing worth living for. No money!—was there ever any thing like it? We might as well be savages at once, and take to beads and shells by way of specie."

"Of course I am wrong," said Antoinette, a little abashed, though she still spoke sadly; "but only think, Mrs. Reginald, of all the mischief money does."

"In the first place, is it money?" asked Mrs. Reginald, shrewdly; "and in the second, don't you know, my dear, that But is the wicked fairy who was not asked to the christening when this social world of ours was born, and who always comes in to spoil every thing? This house would be delightful, But the chimneys smoke; that girl would be all a man's heart could wish for, But her family is not to be endured; that man is the best fellow in the world, But he has not a grain of sense; and so on. But where's the use of arguing? You have burned the check, and set your heart against money—something else must be found.—John, I move that you take us all to the opera. Ninette has not been there yet, you know."

"Hear! hear!" said John.

"Oh!" cried Antoinette, with sparkling eyes, "that will be delightful! When shall we go?—to-morrow?"

"Why not this evening?" he asked, smiling. "It is not too late; and you will soon be ready."

"In five minutes," she said breathlessly; and, without waiting for another word, she was out of the room and was up-stairs in a moment.

Oh! the light heart of youth, that bounds so quickly in answer to the call of pleasure! The joyous spirits which cannot be depressed, but must soar upward like airy bubbles on the summer breeze. Antoinette forgot remorse, money, Oliver, Mademoiselle Mélanie, her own past, present, and future—she forgot all save that she was going to hear divine music, and enter a world of enchantment.

The same magic made Antoinette, who was very neat in her person, but who took plenty of time to be so, dress in the unusually small space of a quarter of an hour. Notwithstanding this celerity, she looked "charming," as Mrs. Reginald declared; and Mrs. Dorrien, whom her son had induced to join them, ratified the verdict.

"That pale-green silk becomes you so well, dear," she said. "John said you would look well in pale green. He has a very correct eye for color."

Antoinette blushed a little, and was glad that John, who was seeing to some business in the library, was not present. Mrs. Dorrien's well-meant but too significant remarks always marred the pleasure Antoinette took in the society and friendship of her cousin.

"It would be so nice if they would only let us alone," she now thought with a half sigh.

The grievance was soon forgotten, and there was no trace of it in Antoinette's mind when she sat in a box with Mrs. Reginald by her side, and John and Mrs. Dorrien, who preferred a back-seat, behind them. The opera was "Lucia," and what with the music, the thrilling voices, and the pathetic story, Antoinette felt in a dream, till she awoke somewhat abruptly during one of the *entr'actes*. John had left them, and Mrs. Dorrien and Mrs. Reginald were talking in subdued tones.

"My dear Mrs. Reginald, I wish you would look at her."

"My dear Mrs. John, I have seen her," answered Mrs. Reginald, whose gaze was obstinately riveted on the orchestra.

"She is lovely," persisted Mrs. Dorrien.

"On the dollish pattern," was the reply.

"Now, you are prejudiced, and if she turns out to be some one else, you will alter your opinion."

"My dear, I never alter my opinions, for the excellent reason that one's second opinion is generally only the small change of the first. Where's John?"

"Yes, I wish he would come," murmured Mrs. Dorrien; "it would be such a good opportunity to see her without any fuss."

Antoinette looked at the two ladies. Mrs. Reginald, after contemplating the orchestra, was now rapt in the pit, and Mrs. Dorrien's gaze was quietly fastened on a box opposite to their own. In that box sat a portly, middle-aged man, and a fair, slender girl in white. Antoinette's heart beat. Were these Monsieur Basnage and his daughter? Whoever she might be she was exceedingly pretty—a smiling, blue-eyed beauty, with a wreath of forget-me-nots in her golden hair. It must be she, for the portly gentleman, turning to some one behind his daughter's chair—a dark shadow, as it seemed to Antoinette—appeared to put a question, and immediately afterward bowed to Mrs. Reginald, who formally returned the salutation.

"I wish John would come," said Mrs. Dorrien, fretfully. "Oh, there he is! John, is not that Monsieur Basnage?"

"Yes, little mother—with his daughter, I suppose—a very pretty girl."

"Dollish, John," said Mrs. Reginald, compassionating his ignorance; "but I never yet knew a man who was not taken in by dollishness," she kindly added.

John laughed. No more was said. The curtain rose, and the Bride of Lammermoor once more unfolded her sorrows. But that tale, so pathetic, so old and so new, could no longer rule Antoinette Dorrien's heart and master her attention. Her eyes kept wandering from the stage to the box opposite, from the hapless Lucia to that pretty, smiling girl, who had no faith to betray, and whose future still lay so fair and so stainless before her. Happy girl! she was evidently the pride of her father's heart; and who could doubt

that he had guarded her till that hour from all harm, from every temptation and every ill?

"Will she marry John, I wonder?" thought Antoinette. "Why not?" and she looked somewhat sadly from one to the other.

John had become very grave; his brow was slightly knit, his lips were compressed, and his look was fastened on Monsieur Basnage's box with a fixedness which did not denote a pleased contemplation of its inmates; then he turned away, leaned back in his seat, looked at the stage, and listened to the performance with marked attention. The Basnages left before the play was over.

"I wonder who is with them?" whispered Mrs. Dorrien in her son's ear.

She spoke low, but Antoinette heard the question, also his reply:

"Oliver Black. Did you not see him? He bowed a while ago."

Antoinette turned a scared look toward the Basnages; she saw Monsieur Basnage's broad black coat, the blue forget-me-nots wreathed in his daughter's golden tresses, and, vanishing almost as soon as seen, the pale, handsome face of Oliver—then the box was black and empty.

This, then, was the dark shadow which she had seen nigh Mademoiselle Basnage. Oliver was come back, and it was thus they met—she sitting by John Dorrien's side, and he standing behind the girl whom John Dorrien might have married, might marry, still! It was thus they met, and she thought him far away. Her heart sank. She felt full of trouble, shame, and sorrow. Was this to love? He was again jealous and angry, she was sure; but was the fault hers or his?—were they both to blame, or might they ask untoward circumstances and perverse fortune to bear the brunt of their sin? Wearisome questions, with which all the misery, all the darkness of her life had come back.

"Why, this Lucy has been too much for the child," kindly said Mrs. Reginald, as the curtain dropped, and they all rose. "She was as gay as a lark when we came out, and now she is as white as if she had seen a ghost."

Alas! poor Antoinette had seen a ghost indeed; but she wished that Mrs. Reginald were not so clear-sighted,

and would let her looks alone. John, however, took no notice of the lady's speech, and Mrs. Dorrien was too full of wonder at the presence of Oliver Black in Monsieur Basnage's box, to think of any thing else. She had no idea that Mr. Black and Monsieur Basnage were so intimate—Oliver actually at the opera with Monsieur Basnage and his daughter!

"Oh, Oliver dined with them some time ago," carelessly said John. "Take care, little mother; we had better wait here awhile for the carriage."

"So he knows that!" thought Antoinette, with a throb at her heart. "But how does he know it? Did Oliver tell him?"

She half hoped that his mother would put the question, but she did not, and Antoinette was left to her surmises during the drive home. Nothing then, or later, occurred to enlighten her. She did not see Oliver for several days, though she heard about him every now and then. When they met Mrs. Dorrien was present, and they could not exchange one word. Antoinette feared, and yet expected that he would again write to her, but he did not. The only letter she received was from Mademoiselle Mélanie, upbraiding her with her abandonment, informing her that she was going back to La Ruya, and hinting obscurely that she, Antoinette, would yet rue her ingratitude.

"I suppose I am behaving very badly to them all," despondently thought Antoinette. "I am deceiving John and Mr. Dorrien. I am ungrateful to aunt and Oliver. Why, I should be blind if I did not see that Oliver is vexed with me."

And with a wearied sigh she put away Mademoiselle Mélanie's letter, and sat down to the task which its arrival had interrupted, a vignette representing a palm-tree.

That, John had said, would be popular in the south, for people writing home to their friends would like a palm-tree at the head of their letters.

"And you know, Antoinette," he added kindly, "that your swallow has been, and is still, our greatest hit, and is making quite a little fortune for us. It has been imitated, pirated, and copied, and is to be seen everywhere—on fans, on brooches, on bracelets. In short, it is quite the rage."

Antoinette's eyes had danced with delight as she heard

him. Success is so sweet to all of us, and fame has a cup and a draught for every one, whatever the great people may think, and however they may fancy that it is to be all their own. And now the joy of her task was gone, her pride was humbled, and her little cup was spilled. The old sad, weary life had begun anew.

By the end of November Mr. Dorrien, who had looked pale and unwell of late, discovered, after a conversation with Dr. Parker, that a winter in the south would set him up again. Mr. Dorrien's absence or presence was a matter of indifference to Antoinette. She could feel no affection for one who treated her with polite coldness. It also seemed to her, since Mr. Dorrien took so little part in the business, leaving it all to John, that he ought not to be missed, and she was surprised to read an expression of vexation and annoyance on the young man's face when he mentioned Mr. Dorrien's departure to his mother. Mrs. Dorrien looked at him wistfully.

"Does it make much difference to you, dear?" she asked.

"Yes, little mother, it does," he answered, "it puts off some things for six months."

"He means the paper-mill," thought Antoinette, furtively trying to read his clouded face; and then she fell into a dream, and wondered if Oliver had advised that journey to gain time, and, with time, his ends. But had he any ends still?—any, at least, so far as she was concerned? He was very pleasant when they met, and looked kindly at her—more kindly than ever; but he did not, as formerly, make opportunities to exchange a few words with her. He never wrote, never even alluded to the Morghens; he let their secret understanding sleep. It was what Antoinette had wished, and asked for, but his compliance mortified her.

The day of Mr. Dorrien's departure was a memorable one in Antoinette's life. It rose with a promise of snow in its gray sky, which the afternoon fulfilled. She sat in Mrs. Reginald's room, drawing, and paused in her task (Antoinette's last hit was a ship in full sail) to look at the white flakes as they fell—pale, silent, and swift as death, thought she.

"Mrs. Reginald," she suddenly said, "are you afraid to die?"

"I really don't know," honestly replied Mrs. Reginald; "I have not tried it, you see. And you, dear—are you afraid?"

"Sometimes it seems very dreadful," answered Antoinette, "and at other times it seems as if I should not mind it much."

"And perhaps you would not," was the earnest answer; "the young are braver than the old in that, and I am not sure that it is not a good thing to die young. Shall I tell you why? My dear, it is always best to go off on a journey in the morning, before the heat of noon and the weariness of evening."

"Ah! but that is such a terrible journey, Mrs. Reginald!" said Antoinette, with a little shudder.

Here was an admirable opportunity to put in a bit of preaching, but, for some reason or other, Mrs. Reginald had of late left Antoinette in peace. Instead of speaking now a word of warning, or comfort, or hope, she looked up at the ceiling, and tightened her lips like one firmly resolved not to open them. Antoinette looked at her almost wistfully, but, seeing her persistent silence, she resumed her task. After a while she said:

"Mr. Dorrien looked very unwell when he went away—did he not, Mrs. Reginald?"

"Yes, dear; but he has looked unwell for the last fifteen years."

"If—if any thing was to happen to him," hesitatingly said Antoinette, "would it be a bad thing—I mean, a very bad thing—for John?"

"I cannot see why it should," coolly answered Mrs. Reginald; "the firm is to be John's to all intents and purposes."

She gave Antoinette a sharp look, but Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter breathed a relieved sigh, and said earnestly:

"I am glad to hear it, Mrs. Reginald,—oh, so glad!"

"Why, you silly little chick!" said the lady, good-humoredly, "don't you know that, at all events, the matter would rest between you two?—for between you and him there is no one; you are the last of the Dorriens—for the time being," she prudently added.

"We are the last of the Dorriens—he and I," thought Antoinette. "O John! my true, my faithful friend, there would never be contention between us, but—but what shall I do if Mr. Dorrien dies, and Oliver and aunt get hold of me?"

A great sickening fear came over the girl's heart. She could not bear it; she could not go on with her task. She pushed her paper away. She rose, went up to the window, and there stood, looking at the snow. The garden was already white with it. With an impatient sigh Antoinette turned from the dreary prospect, came back to the table, gave her drawing a dissatisfied look, and said:

"Mrs. Reginald, do you think John has come back from seeing Mr. Dorrien off?"

"My dear, he never went," answered Mrs. Reginald, a little dryly; "Mr. Dorrien said he had better stay and attend to some pressing matters, so it was little Mr. Black who saw Mr. Dorrien off."

Antoinette looked a little startled. Did that mean any thing?—did Mrs. Reginald mean any thing?—for to construe every incident that occurred, every word that was spoken, according to her secret fears, was her lot now. But Mrs. Reginald's brown face, on which the light from the fire played, told her no other tale than the plain one which her words conveyed: Mr. Black, and not John Dorrien, had gone with her grandfather to the station.

"Then, since John is at home," resumed Antoinette, taking up her drawing, "I shall go down and show him this; I do not half like it."

"Do, dear. John has a very correct eye."

Antoinette left the room, and slowly went down-stairs with her drawing in her hand. The gas was not yet lit, and only the pale reflection of the snow from the court filled the hall below her. In that light she caught a glimpse of John entering the library.

"O John," she said, but the door had already closed upon him. She hurried down, and followed him in. The room was lit, and she found him bending over his desk, searching among the papers upon it. "Oh! pray," she said, eagerly, "give my drawing a look before you do any thing else."

He turned round slowly, with his hand still among the papers, and he showed her the face, not of John, but of Oliver Black. Why he was there, and what he was doing near the desk of his friend, she knew, and by the smile on his face she saw that he was aware of her knowledge. They stood so one moment — she filled with fear, horror, and

shame; he cool, with an unchanging marble face and audacious bearing.

"John is not here," he said; "you will find him in the store-room, if you want him."

She did not answer. She seemed rooted to the spot on which her feet rested. He had asked her to do this thing, and she had refused to obey him with indignation; but yet the abyss which there is between a deed suggested and a deed done had divided his proposal from his action. She had not felt, she could not feel, of the one the horror she felt of the other.

"Dearest," said Oliver, perceiving that she did not move, "ought you to stay here? John might come back, and it would be awkward."

She did not stir.

"Oliver," she said, in a low tone, "do not do it."

"Do not do what?" he asked, smiling coolly.

"Do not do it," she repeated, and her face was ashy white, and tears of anguish flowed down her cheeks.

"But do not do what?" he insisted. "If you mean that I ought not to stay here—why, it was John who sent me."

"He sent you!" she said, almost with a cry, "and you can do it?"

"My dear child," he remonstrated, with his look of candor, "what can you mean, and what did *you* want with John? Ah! to show him your drawing," said he, taking it from her hand. "Why, you little witch," he added, laughing, "is that ship for me? Did some bird whisper in your ear that I am going off again? By-the-by, we must make the most of the present time. John is safe in the store-room for ten minutes, if not more. Dearest, I am going to New York, not to-night or to-morrow, of course, but some days hence. The news is not official yet. It is Mr. Dorrien who sends me, and John does not know a word of it, so don't let it out. Every thing is going on swimmingly; while Mr. Dorrien is away I cannot do much, but the moment he comes back you may rely upon it that I shall bring matters to a crisis."

He did not see, or, seeing it, he ignored Antoinette's dismayed face as he uttered these words, and he did not feel, or, feeling it, he again ignored the shrinking with

which, as he drew her toward him, and said fondly, "Good-by, darling," she avoided the embrace, and in a moment, as if afraid of discovery, had escaped out of the room.

She flew up-stairs like one pursued. She entered her room, filled with gray twilight, and, bolting the door behind her, she stood breathless on the middle of the floor. She raised her arms, she clasped her hands above her head, and she said aloud, in the bitterness of her anguish, "Oh! I love him no more—no more! I love him no more!"

Antoinette was dull and pale when she came down to dinner that evening. She was also very silent, but, when Mrs. Reginald asked what ailed her, she opened her dark eyes wide, and said, almost eagerly:

"Oh, I am very well, Mrs. Reginald—very well, I assure you."

"I see that you brought me this," said John, handing her the little drawing of the ship. "I found it on the floor of the library with another paper. I suspect Mr. Dorrien's cat must have come in while I was out."

"And so you leave your papers about, you negligent boy!" said Mrs. Reginald, tartly. "How do you know who might pry into them?"

"No, Mrs. Reginald, I do not," answered John, smiling —"none, at least, that I care for. My papers are always under lock and key, save those which the whole world may look it."

Antoinette, who had held her breath while he spoke, allowed a sigh of relief to escape her as she heard this. Oliver's attempted treason had availed him nothing.

"But I love him no more—no more!" she repeated to her own heart in dreary wonder.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE winter had gone by, spring had returned, and with spring Mr. Dorrien, as pale and languid as ever, and with a touch of impatience bordering upon fretfulness, to temper the cool politeness of his manners.

He had been home about a week, when Antoinette entered Mrs. Reginald's sitting-room half an hour before dinner-time, to put a question to that lady.

"Mrs. Reginald," she asked, uneasily, "is there any one coming to dine with Mr. Dorrien this evening? I hear voices below."

"And you are surprised. Of course you are. Who ever heard of leading the life we lead here? We might as well be in China, my dear. No one comes near us, and we go near no one. I don't call that civilization," emphatically added Mrs. Reginald.

"And who is our guest this evening?" eagerly asked Antoinette.

"Only little Mr. Black, dear."

The girl's color faded, and she stared before her.

"I did not know he had come back from America," she said, in a low tone.

"Oh, yes, he came back two or three days ago. I remember now you were not in the room when John said so. Well, my dear, the pleasure you must feel at his return was only deferred. You are not going to change your dress for Mr. Black!" added Mrs. Reginald, raising her voice as she saw Antoinette turning to the door.

"Oh, no," said Antoinette, "I shall stay as I am, but I must go up to my room for a few minutes."

Up to her room she went, shivering all the way, and when she was there she sat down, and, looking at the spring sun, which shone on the cold, waxed floor, she brooded dreamily on what lay before her.

It is very hard to cease to love, to sit by the spent fire and see the white and dead ashes of that which was once so living and so bright. The extinguished hearth is the fit type of all desolation.

Antoinette felt sorrow inexpressible at the change in herself. She had been battling against it ever since her arrival in Paris, but it had prevailed over her, and now she conquered. She had ceased to love.

Oliver Black had committed a fatal mistake with this young girl. She had plenty of faults, which he might easily have turned to his own ends. She was rash, imprudent, willful, and self-reliant. She could be obstinate in good or in evil, and she could feel strong aversions, even as

she could feel strong loves. But she had one quality on which he had not reckoned. Some people are naturally amiable, others are high-minded, and others again are very patient, and they are so almost without effort, because they cannot help it. Antoinette's attribute was that she was true. It was not in her power to be otherwise. She had never practised the ways of deceit, and, though she had been taught no regard for truth, she could not swerve from it with impunity. She ever committed some blunder through which trouble came, or success whenever she succeeded only gave her shame and distress. She had struggled against the feeling which seemed a treason to love. She had invented excuses for Oliver, but it had been in vain. His plausible cynicism could not convince her against the irresistible arguments of her conscience, which told her daily how base it is to lie. She despised herself for the life of falsehood which she led; and, just retribution, she also despised him who made her lead it.

Oliver was too keen not to see the change in her, but his nature was too low to fathom its motive. "She thinks John the better match of the two, and she throws me by for him," thought Mr. Black, angrily. "Well, let her! the game is not played out. They will laugh who win. In the mean while, I will not let her free till my purpose is served."

He was so far right that the contrast between John Dorrien and himself had quickened his young mistress's sense of his unworthiness. Antoinette had begun by almost hating her cousin. He was very kind to her, she could not deny it, and she was grateful for it too, after a fashion; but it irritated her to see the worship he received from his mother and Mrs. Reginald, and her pride was stung at the frank and open position he could assume, while she must needs stoop daily to mean arts. Most willingly, if she could, would she have thrown the burden of Oliver's sin, and of her own, upon him, and sent him, a scape-goat, into the desert; but she could not. The same honesty which made her hate the wrong in herself forbade her to hate the right in John. She did her best not to compare him with Oliver, but that too was not in her power. Oliver himself, by entering into competition with her cousin, had rendered comparison inevitable. Day after day Antoi-

nette was obliged to look at these two men and to judge them. She tried to turn from the contemplation, for it filled her with bitterness and sorrow; but something or other ever forced it on her, till her heart grew faint and weary with the pain. Alas! that love which is born so quickly, which a look, a word, may kindle into sudden and burning life, should expire so slowly, and through such bitter throes!

But, though Antoinette's love was sickening of a most grievous disease, it was living still when she entered the library on the evening of the day of Mr. Dorrien's departure. It was living, and while there is life there is hope; but, when she saw Oliver's treacherous hand in the papers of his friend, her love died in one moment. It died of a death for which there is no resurrection—it died killed by shame, contempt, and a sort of horror which left nothing behind, not one soft or tender memory, nothing but the stinging recollection of a great error.

And now Oliver was come back, and they must meet again. She delayed going down till she dare delay no longer. Her heart nearly failed her as she stood in the hall; for Oliver was behind that closed door, and what if he were there alone! At length she took heart, and opened it. At once she saw Oliver; but, oh! relief inexpressible, Mrs. John Dorrien was with him. Her pale cheeks resumed their glow, and in her gladness she almost smiled.

Oliver sat on the sofa, and the moment the door opened he saw her. Antoinette wore a dress of pale yellow lawn, of simple yet becoming make; a crimson knot fastened her white collar, and another knot of the same bright hue nestled in her dark hair. Oliver Black had a keen, artistic feeling for the picturesque, and, as she paused for a moment on the threshold, and he saw her, fresh, bright, and young, he smiled, remembering a gay landscape which he had seen once or twice—a landscape of yellow, waving corn, with two bright poppies dancing in the sun. What else there was in it he had forgotten, but the yellow corn and the two red poppies had remained in his mind, and suddenly came back to him now.

"A nice little thing, if she would only be amenable," he thought, casting a critical look on Antoinette.

But that she would not be so he knew even before she

closed the door. She might smile; but cold revolt was in her look, in her bearing, in the very turn of her slender neck. He felt it in her passive hand when they exchanged the calm greeting of acquaintances who meet again after a long but unimportant separation.

"Only think, dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Dorrien, smiling and looking delighted, "your pretty swallow is all the rage in America. Mr. Black saw nothing else."

"I am sorry for America," coolly answered Antoinette; "I thought there was so much to be seen there."

Mrs. Dorrien looked baffled, and Oliver changed the subject, and entertained John's mother after his own pleasant fashion; but all the time he looked at Antoinette from where he leaned back among the sofa-cushions, with his handsome head framed by the red-velvet drapery of the window behind him. Antoinette did not see that look, and Mrs. Dorrien did not understand its meaning. It was a peculiar look, calm, ironical, and withal dispassionate—the look of an amateur who studies a pretty picture at a sale from a point of view which he feels to be final, who admits its merits, but also sees its blemishes and general unsuitableness, and decides not to bid for it. After all, be it remembered that he had never really loved her: he had sought her not by any means for her own sake, but because he wished to make a stepping-stone of her. If he had found her to be plain or repelling, he would certainly have let her go by as a chance not worth his purchase; but, being as she was, pleasing and attractive, he had been glad to win her as well as the position which such gain he thought must needs bring; but, now that she was a clog, and not a help, all that he had once liked in her seemed to fade away. She was useless—worse than useless; she was dangerous, and a feeling very much akin to hate—for Oliver Black was not, and never could be, a real hater—rose within him as he now looked at her. He felt, and had felt even before he went away, that Antoinette had been turning from him and his teaching, and looking up more and more to John Dorrien.

A better man than he was would have resented this, and resented it all the more that he deserved it. "Il n'y a que la vérité qui fâche," says the old French proverb. To be read through, weighed, and found light, is hard to

bear; but Oliver was a philosopher, and he had let her have her way. Why should he not? If he wished to slip his neck from that tie, so ill-advised, so dangerous even—must he not let her slip out of it too?

It was not pleasant; the least jealous of men would dislike such a contingency; but there are many unpleasant things in life, and Mr. Black, who had gone through some, was prepared to go through plenty more, if need be. So her altered manner did not surprise him much now, nor grieve him much either, especially remembering as he did their parting—but it did disturb him a little; for, after all, he was mortal, and had his weaknesses, and, though he at first entertained Mrs. Dorrien in his pleasantest strain, and repeated all the old hackneyed jokes about the Yankees, he flagged after a while, and John's mother began to think her task of keeping company in Mrs. Reginald's stead very wearisome. She felt quite tired, and was even provoked with Antoinette, who, instead of helping her, sat there cold and silent, as if Mr. Black were the greatest stranger, instead of being John's friend. In her vexation she said and did what she would not have said or done otherwise. The conversation had fallen upon that inexhaustible topic, the weather.

The spring was unusually warm and early, and a horse-chestnut tree in Mr. Dorrien's garden had wellnigh vied with the famous tree in the Tuileries garden. It had expanded one broad leaf three days after that historical character.

"Only think, Mr. Black, three days!—My dear," turning to Antoinette, "there is daylight enough yet to show Mr. Black our horse-chestnut. Take him out and let him see it, will you?"

Antoinette's color faded, but she met Oliver's mocking look, and she started to her feet in a moment.

"With great pleasure," she said, not without a sort of defiance.

"I cannot go, you know," apologetically remarked Mrs. Dorrien to Oliver; "the sun is out still, but the air is keen, and I must not venture out at this hour."

Oliver politely begged that she would not mention it, and followed Antoinette out of the room.

"What a relief!" murmured Mrs. Dorrien, sinking back

in her end of the sofa. "I don't know what possessed Antoinette to be so disagreeable to the poor young man. Now she must be civil to him, at least."

The sun had not yet set when the pair, after crossing the hall, and opening the glass door, stepped down into the garden; but its ruddy light had retreated to the high walls and glittering windows of the neighboring houses; below all was cool, gray, and dim.

"You little witch!" said Oliver, turning his laughing face on Antoinette, almost as soon as the door closed upon them; "by what spell did you make the Dragon—John's own Dragon, too—give us this chance?"

Antoinette walked on without answering.

"Only think, dearest," whispered Oliver, walking by her side—"your aunt is in Paris! This time she has taken up her abode in Mr. Brown's own house. I met her on the stairs this morning, as I looked in at him about these eternal Morghens. She says she must see you."

Antoinette stood still.

"Mr. Dorrien will not allow it," she said.

"Oh! perhaps he has changed his mind."

"Mr. Dorrien will not allow it. The first thing he did on his return was to question me about her, and to inform me that, while I staid in his house, I must have no intercourse with my aunt. He has heard about her misfortunes at Monaco, and it seems she has been there again, and he is quite inexorable."

Oliver raised his eyebrows, but was silent.

"Will you tell her so?" she asked, after a pause.

"Oh! certainly. I cannot say with pleasure, for I need not tell you that Mademoiselle Mélanie will be exasperated. Are you quite sure that Mr. Dorrien is obdurate?"

"Quite sure."

"Make John try. He can do a good deal with the governor."

Antoinette looked up with a flash of pride. She knew that Oliver only said this to ascertain whether she had asked John or not, and she scorned to deny.

"John has failed," she answered, briefly.

"And cannot you do without Mr. Dorrien's consent?" asked Oliver, with a curious smile.

She shook her head in impatient denial.

"This, then, is your final resolve."

"It is. I will never risk again what I risked once; with what result you know."

There was a pause, during which they exchanged looks. Each felt that more was coming; that the great crisis was at hand, and it was even more to vex her, than to delay the evil day, that Oliver said:

"Let us forget Mademoiselle Mélanie, and talk of ourselves. What have you to tell me, dearest?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing, and we have not met for so long? You might ask how I have fared, how I am getting on with Mr. Dorrien, and what chance there is of that opening we both long for so much."

It is hard to deceive a woman who has ceased to love. Antoinette turned upon him with a sort of scorn.

"What opening?" she asked.

"My darling, you know what I mean. Some opening that will allow me to say to Mr. Dorrien, 'Sir, I love your granddaughter, and she loves me, but we are both too poor to enter upon house-keeping without your help. If you will sink all your capital in that confounded mill—no, I should not use that strong adjective, of course—or if John will not marry Mademoiselle Basnage, whose money would be so useful—'"

"And will he not marry her?" interrupted Antoinette.

"Well, I believe he will, in the end," candidly answered Oliver; "because, you see, he must. The firm wants her money too much, and then John has not seen her to speak of, and when he does see her he will find compliance easy, for she is truly charming."

Antoinette was silent awhile, then she said:

"I hope she is worthy of him. John deserves to be happy."

"Of course he does," answered Oliver; "but surely so do we. Is that the horse-chestnut tree?" he added, critically examining a tree before him, on which a few frail green leaves shivered in the chill April air. "A poor concern, I must say."

"Oliver!"

In a moment he knew what was coming, and turned slowly round to look at her.

"It is all over, and you know it," said Antoinette, whose face was white. "You need not speak to Mr. Dorrien. You are free, and so am I."

"I suppose you have been thinking this over," remarked Oliver, coolly, though his dark eyes burned like fire.

"I have. You never liked me, Oliver, and I—I like you no more."

"You are candid, Miss Dorrien," he said, with cool sarcasm. "Have you any thing else to say?"

Very quietly she answered:

"Nothing."

"What if I refuse to let you free? What if I insist that you keep your solemn promise to me?"

She looked at him, and said, wearedly:

"Why do you try to cheat me, Oliver? It is all over, and you know it; and do not wish it to be otherwise; and you have no desire to speak to Mr. Dorrien, for you never liked me, and I—I like you no more."

She used the same words she had already used, with sad iteration. She was very sorrowful, not for him, but for the love that was dead within her. Heartless though he was, Oliver felt a little pang of regret at losing her. She had liked him, and he knew it, and, for the sake of that liking, he was almost sorry to let her go.

"But I cannot lose you so—I cannot, indeed," said he, drawing near her, and half smiling. "You must tell me what I have done—who has been poisoning your mind against me. You must, in common justice."

He spoke in his tone of candor. A shudder ran through Antoinette's whole frame, and he saw it. She remembered the lies, she remembered the baseness and the treason. She clasped her hands in amazement and indignation. And, as if to bid him remember how and when her love had died, her look rested for a moment on the windows of the library. But she said no more; she walked on without looking back. And Oliver did remember, and his eye followed her receding figure with no friendly look; but he also smiled at her folly in throwing down the glove so openly. "Poor little thing!" thought Mr. Black.

"And where is Miss Dorrien?" asked Mrs. Dorrien, surprised, as Oliver entered the drawing-room alone.

"Miss Dorrien's head aches," he answered, lowering

his voice in polite concern. "I have seen the tree—very remarkable."

"How vexatious!" said Mrs. Dorrien, a little crossly, for she thought that all the trouble of entertaining the visitor would fall upon her again. But she was saved this infliction. John came in, then Mrs. Reginald, who was civil and dignified, then Mr. Dorrien; and it was time for the dinner, during which Oliver made himself very pleasant, but at which Antoinette did not appear.

"Her head aches," said Mrs. Dorrien, on Oliver's authority.

"Poor child!" exclaimed Mrs. Reginald, in a tone of concern.

John was silent, but looked grave.

"Very distressing these headaches are," murmured Mr. Dorrien. "And so you say, Mr. Black, that the Yankee shrewdness has been overrated."

Oliver was sure of it, and he gave plenty of instances in point, which proved at least that he had found something to take note of in America besides Antoinette's swallow.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"MRS. JOHN!"

"Yes, dear."

"Mind what I tell you." Mrs. Dorrien on being thus addressed by Mrs. Reginald, who had come as usual to give her "a look" in her room, put down her work and looked earnestly in the face of her friend. Mrs. Reginald, having thus secured her attention, raised her forefinger, to keep it fast, and emphatically observed, "There is something going on."

Trouble bordering on dismay appeared in the wistful face of John's mother. She had become unfitted for anxiety of any kind, and could no longer, as once, battle with life.

"Something going on!" she faltered. "O Mrs. Reginald, what can it be?"

"That," calmly answered Mrs. Reginald, "I do not know."

"Not at all?"

"Not in the least."

Mrs. Dorrien's face fell.

"Perhaps there is nothing going on, dear," she remarked, trying to rally and look cheerful.

"Yes, there is," positively said her friend. "You must have noticed how things look before a storm—air heavy, sky dark, man and beast alike uneasy, the very insects twice as troublesome as usual—in short, every thing telling us—the storm is coming. Well, my dear, so it has been in this house for the last week, and I am amazed, I am, that you have not noticed it."

Mrs. Dorrien, who had taken up her work, put it down again.

"What! have *you* noticed it, dear?" she asked.

"How do you like John's looks?" said Mrs. Reginald, by way of reply.

"Dear John is always grave," said John's mother, hesitatingly; "he has so much on his mind."

"Well, then, I dare say he has a good deal on his mind just now," dryly remarked Mrs. Reginald, "for he is as grave as a judge, and as silent as a stick."

Mrs. Dorrien looked perplexed.

"And Miss Dorrien?—what do you think of Miss Dorrien?" inquired Mrs. Reginald, nodding. "Does she look happy with that white face of hers?"

"She is out of health just now, dear."

"Out of health!—she is simply miserable. But why so?—ah! why?"

"I hope—I trust nothing is amiss between her and John," ejaculated Mrs. Dorrien, plaintively.

"Who ever knows what ails these silly young things?" contemptuously said Mrs. Reginald. "They are either all right or all wrong, without rhyme or reason; but something does ail her, that is sure."

"But Mr. Dorrien looks so well and cheerful!" cried Mrs. Dorrien, as if she had just made the discovery. "I never saw him in better spirits."

"That is the greatest sign of all," exclaimed Mrs. Reginald, triumphantly. "When a man looks so wholly unlike

his former self as our Mr. Dorrien looks just now, something must be going on. As to Mr. Brown," she added, more soberly, "he is simply beyond any comprehension of mine. He never comes near me, and, when we meet, he skulks away, like a dog who has stolen a bone, and who deserves a whipping."

"Well, but what can be going on?" argued Mrs. Dorrien.

"My dear, I don't know, and don't even try to know," coolly answered Mrs. Reginald. "Life is full of mysteries, which neither you nor I can fathom. Who knows, for instance, where the dogs go? Is it love?—is it pleasure?—is it business? How steadily they do trot along the streets, through cars, legs, horses, rain, or mud! They have a purpose, only what is it? I long wanted to find it out, but was obliged to give it up, and since then I have taken the lesson to heart, and don't worry myself because I can't understand what is going on before my eyes; only, dear, you must not scold if I say that it is since little Mr. Black came back from America that something has been going on."

Mrs. Dorrien uttered an exclamation. What could Mr. Black have to do with what was going on? Mrs. Reginald looked upward, and did not know, but was sure that something had been going on since that little Mr. Black had come back. She did not wish to be uncharitable, but of that she was quite sure.

Mrs. Dorrien, whose fears were roused, tried to elicit something more definite out of her friend, but Mrs. Reginald either would or could not say more than she had said. Her conscience pricked her for her significant allusion to Mr. Black. Though she indulged in her unreasonable dislike of him, she knew well enough that it was wrong, and she was all the more pertinaciously silent because she felt really uneasy.

The change in Mr. Dorrien was that which impressed her most. It did not seem to her so much the change of recruited health as that of languid spirits stimulated by some secret motive into fictitious life.

"Look at him now," thought she to herself, as, after leaving her friend (in no cheerful frame of mind), she went down the stairs, and through the broad-landing window saw him alighting at the *perron*—"is that our Mr. Dor-

rien, so languid, so leisurely in all his movements? Why, that man is as jaunty and holds his head as high as if he were twenty-five. And I declare there is little Mr. Black coming up to him, and grinning up in his face. I dare say Mr. Dorrien is asking him to dinner, and that we shall have him again to-day. Pah! I must not look—it makes me sin, it does."

It certainly did Mrs. Reginald's moral being no good to see the excellent understanding which prevailed between Mr. Dorrien and John's friend. It would have irritated her still more could she have felt certain that her surmise was a correct one, and that Mr. Dorrien had been uttering one of those friendly invitations to dinner which by bringing her face to face with her discarded lover, had become the torment of Antoinette's life. But Oliver, with many thanks, had modestly excused himself. He had an engagement. He was afraid he could not come. He had given the papers to Mr. Brown, who would explain, and so forth. But Mr. Brown's explanations were not pleasing to Mr. Dorrien. Mr. Brown had not the gay looks, the agreeable voice, and the epigrammatic manner of Oliver Black. Moreover, Mr. Brown had not fathomed this matter, and there might be mistakes; so Mr. Dorrien again pressed Mr. Black to stay; and Mr. Black, after a show of resistance, yielded, and agreed to go in and take the papers from Mr. Brown, and bring them in to Mr. Dorrien in his own room.

He found that gentleman leaning back on his dark but luxurious couch, abstractedly stroking his gray Angora cat and looking somewhat excited.

"Well, Mr. Black," he exclaimed, scarcely giving his visitor time to sit down, "what does the architect say?"

"Well, sir," answered Oliver, without a moment's hesitation, "I find the matter even more serious than I anticipated—but I had better explain."

"Another time—after dinner," interrupted Mr. Dorrien. "Will you kindly give me the result of your information now?"

"Well, then, you must have been deceived in the estimates—I mean," he added, correcting himself at once, "that John must have committed some mistake; the outlay will be enormous. It will require all the capital of the

firm, or nearly so; and, should war or revolution supervene, La Maison Dorrien would be at the mercy of events—such, at least, is the conclusion one must come to, after consulting the estimates of Monsieur Landre. You will find the figures here."

"Of course, of course," impatiently said Mr. Dorrien, glancing over the papers which Oliver handed to him; "I always said so. It is folly! Mr. John Dorrien must be infatuated about that mill; he always was. We cannot run that fearful risk; I always said so."

"John is imaginative," hesitatingly said Oliver, "and imagination is a great deluder. He was a poet, you know."

"A poet!" interrupted Mr. Dorrien, with a little start of surprise; "I never knew any thing about it. A poet! Are you sure, Mr. Black?"

Yes, Mr. Black was quite sure; but, after all, what John had been mattered little; the question was, what he was now; and the only unfortunate result of his boyish propensity for verse was that unlucky gift of imagination, which, when carried into business, was so dangerous a faculty.

"Of course, of course," murmured Mr. Dorrien. "I need not tell you, Mr. Black, that I have no illiberal prejudice against poets—of course not; but they are not men of business. And, though Mr. John Dorrien has great talents, and has been most useful, it is no use denying that, when he advocates a paper-mill, his imagination carries him too far. I am sure Monsieur Basnage must have got wind of it, and he is most useful—most useful. And then I have other views. I want a change—a total change; the doctors say Paris air is fatal to me. I have a mind to buy some house, or little château, or something of the kind, on a railway-line, not far from the sea, and of course I want money for that."

"Of course," answered Oliver in a low tone, while his dark eyes burned with sudden fire. "The château which belonged to Mr. Blackmore" (he never called him "my father"), "and in which I was born, is still for sale," said he.

"Indeed! And do you consider it a desirable purchase, Mr. Black?"

"Decidedly so. The house has no great pretensions—

a French château, you know—but it is commodious, and well furnished. The grounds are delightful; there is plenty of fishing in the little river that runs through them; the railway-station is within a short drive, and the sea beats against the cliffs that shelter it from the easterly winds. To crown all, the heir-at-law, Mr. Blackmore, is tired of having the place, which he does not use, on his hands, and he will give it up for far less than its real value, only"—Oliver paused, and smiled—"only he requires ready money."

Mr. Dorrien made no comment.

"Have you seen the place lately?" he asked. "Are you sure it is still for sale?"

"Quite sure, unless it was sold two days ago. It was advertised in yesterday's *Galignani*."

He took the number out of his pocket, and showed it to Mr. Dorrien, who there saw enunciated all the advantages belonging to La Maison Rouge, concluding with a significant hint of moderate terms, which made the man of business smile.

"Strange if he should buy it," thought Oliver, watching Mr. Dorrien's pale face and gold eye-glass above the edge of the newspaper: "strange if I should thus step back into what should have been mine but for my poor dad's dilatoriness! Who knows but I may, and that La Maison Rouge may not prove the surest of antidotes to John Dorrien's paper-mill?"

"La Chapelle is the name of the place, is it?" said Mr. Dorrien. "Can you leave me this, Mr. Black?" he added, putting the newspaper down.

"By all means. But I have been thinking again about the mill! there may be exaggerations. Shall I consult another architect, and—"

Mr. Dorrien interrupted him by impatiently inquiring what the use of that would be.

"No," he added, in the tone of a man who has made up his mind, "I must have some conversation with Mr. John Dorrien, that is all. I am greatly obliged to you, Mr. Black, for the trouble you have taken in all this. I wish the matter had not gone so far, especially in what concerns Monsieur Basnage, who has been growing decidedly cool of late. Mr. John Dorrien is to blame in this too. I am

sorry for it. I liked the connection, but of course I cannot seem to care about it, if Monsieur Basnage does not."

Mr. Dorrien spoke in a vexed tone, and looked restlessly at Oliver, who, laughing gayly, said:

"I am nobody, and perhaps can mend matters—at least, I shall not commit either you, sir, or La Maison Dorrien, if I attempt what you or John certainly could not do without making Monsieur Basnage conceited. I can feel the ground, and advance or draw back, according to Monsieur Basnage's mood."

"Well, yes," said Mr. Dorrien, brightening at the suggestion, which, indeed, he had both expected and wished for; "you can do that, Mr. Black. I shall be obliged to you. And will you also kindly see Mr. Brown before dinner, and make that matter clear to him?" added Mr. Dorrien, who was already tired of business, and who dreaded entering upon the subject of the paper-mill with his precise subordinate.

Oliver smiled good-humoredly, and was ready to do any thing to please Mr. Dorrien. He took up his papers, and, with the same smiling face, went at once to Mr. Brown's room.

"Well, Mr. Brown," said he, airily, as he entered that gentleman's presence, "I really think I have accomplished two things. That matter of the Morghens is settled for good. The little hitch we had is over, and, so far as they are concerned, you need have no more trouble on your mind."

Mr. Brown pushed up his spectacles, and smiled beamingly on the young man. Mr. Black was too good, too good, and he, Mr. Brown, had been thinking of frames for the Morghens—black and gold. Did he, Mr. Black, think they would suit? "For engravings, you know, for engravings, black and gold," pursued Mr. Brown, slightly excited.

"The poor old devil is actually going to pinch himself for these hideous black-and-gold things," he good-naturedly thought; so he, in the same fit of good-nature, suggested that Mr. Brown need not trouble about frames at all. But Mr. Brown thereupon looked so blank that Oliver perceived he wished to spend on his beloved Morghens, and, praising the black-and-gold frames as chaste and suitable, he glided into other matters.

"You will be glad to learn, Mr. Brown," he calmly remarked, "that the paper-mill is, as you foretold, really impracticable, and must be given up. I have all the figures here."

"Excuse me, Mr. Black," cautiously remarked Mr. Brown, "I did not foretell—I only expressed a doubt."

"Which proves your sagacity by becoming a fact," persisted Oliver, determined on committing him to his side of the question.

But Mr. Brown could not be committed.

"Excuse me, Mr. Black," said he, "but, if Mr. John Dorrien's figures do not prove the truth of his views, other figures cannot prove their falsehood."

"Well, well," good-humoredly replied Oliver, "I have done what Mr. Dorrien wished me to do—set a clever architect to work, and here is the result. It may be right, or it may be wrong—*you* will find that out, Mr. Brown."

Mr. Brown softened, as usual, to that pleasant face and good-tempered way of Oliver's. There never was any resisting that agreeable young man, who always yielded to you so gracefully. Now Mr. John Dorrien was an excellent young gentleman, to be sure, but he was apt to be arbitrary, and if he took up a notion, and thought it a right one, neither heaven nor earth, viz., Mr. Brown, could move him, or make him give it up; and so, unconsciously, no doubt, but still none the less surely, did Mr. Brown like to find that infallible, dogmatic John in the wrong, and, with that bias on his mind, set himself to study the papers after Oliver was gone.

Mr. Black repaired to the drawing-room. "Curious if I should find her there!" he thought.

Yes, Antoinette was there, but she was not alone. John and his mother were with her, and the three were looking at the sketch of a new design for note-paper which Antoinette was showing them. They stood in the window. The light from the west fell on their faces—Mrs. Dorrien's so faded and so wan, Antoinette's with a flush of pleasure upon it just now, and John's so frank and manly. They all seemed pleased, and Antoinette was laughing, and John was looking at Antoinette with a smile in his gray eyes.

"May I look too?" asked Oliver, coming forward, and

approaching Antoinette, who started and turned pale as she heard his voice.

It was John who held the design, and he handed it to him, saying:

"Look, and admire, if you please."

Antoinette's last production was quaint and pleasing. A pretty girlish head, with a hat and feathers, white collar and blue bow, and a pair of wings peeping out behind.

"We were asking Miss Dorrien if she too has wings, and means to fly away from us," said John.

"A pretty fancy," remarked Oliver, ignoring this speech, and evidently referring to the drawing; "but a head and wings and no body—will not that have an unfinished look, Miss Dorrien?"

"And how would you have me finish it, Mr. Black?" she asked calmly.

"Oh! there are so many ways of ending these fair sylph-like creatures," he replied, smiling. "A wasp would do for this one, I fancy. She looks as if she could not merely fly away, but sting too."

That he meant to sting, Antoinette knew, as she heard him. As to that, so did John Dorrien know it, and his dark eyebrows contracted slightly. Oliver Black had yielded to temper, and he was sorry for it as soon as the words were spoken; but seeing Antoinette near John had proved too much for his equanimity. He had just that sort of jealousy which requires no love for its existence—the jealousy of wounded vanity; but, as we said, he was sorry, and he did his best to mend the blunder. The dinner-bell gave him the best opportunity in the world of doing so. Oliver Black at once devoted himself to Mrs. John Dorrien, and was so sunny, so amiable, and so charming, that the lady could not but be graciously pleased; and even John was softened, and sent his suspicion to sleep. Only Antoinette remained sad and grave during all dinner-time, and for the whole of the evening averted her looks from her discarded lover.

"Oh! it is to be war, is it?" thought Oliver, amused. "Poor little thing, you little know what lies in store for you."

Mr. Dorrien, whose good spirits contrasted with those of his granddaughter, could not keep them up; however, he retired early, and Oliver, who had felt dreadfully bored

at heart, left at the same time with the master of the house. With a sigh of relief he crossed the threshold of the old gate, and found himself in the quiet street, with the stars shining above him, and a calm fair moon floating in vapory clouds far away above the city roofs. The night was balmy enough for summer, and Oliver thought how soft and silvery it must be in the shady grounds of his dead father's old abode. Yes, he would like to get the French château back again. He was born there, the child of shame and unlawful love; he had been politely, but none the less positively, told to leave it by the distant cousin who had claimed and legally held what should have been his inheritance. It had witnessed all that was cruel and bitter in his life. He would like to make it the witness of his triumph too. It would be pleasant to his smarting pride if he could cross that threshold with the tread of a master, and defy those old rooms to deny him any more their shelter—nay, what should prevent him from resuming, by going through proper legal forms, of course, his name of Blackmore.

"Well, Mr. Black," said a sharp voice at his elbow, which, though it addressed him in English, was decidedly foreign in accent, "have you seen the young lady yet?"

"My dear Mademoiselle Mélanie," blandly replied Oliver, "you may believe me, not till this very evening could I have that little conversation with her, carried on in subdued tones, while John Dorrien, confound him! was looking on, by which I could ascertain her final resolve. I grieve to say that, with many expressions of regret, she declines seeing you—indeed, professes herself unable to do so, while under Mr. Dorrien's care. Very unpleasant to all parties; but, poor little thing, what can she do?"

"You take her part!—you are in league with her!" cried Mademoiselle Mélanie, ready to turn all her wrath upon him.

"I!" and Oliver shrugged his shoulders significantly—"why, she would very much like to get rid of me if she could."

"The little ungrateful serpent!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Mélanie, thinking not of his, but of her own wrongs.

"My dear Mademoiselle Mélanie," he remarked in his bland way, "what is the use of disguising the truth? The young lady wants us no more. You are not her real aunt,

and she prefers her real grandfather to you. I am a poor devil, and she prefers John Dorrien to me. We must bear it, my dear mademoiselle—we must bear it."

He spoke good-humoredly, but his bantering tone exasperated her all the more, and the light from the gas-lamp near which they stood showed him her pale face, turning white with rage. At first she said nothing. Then suddenly turning upon him, "What will you give me if I help you to be revenged upon her?" she asked.

"Revenged!" he answered, coolly. "My dear Mademoiselle Mélanie, I have not the faintest wish for revenge. I am a practical man, you see, and I think revenge a very foolish, useless feeling—an expensive one too, sometimes."

He laughed in her face in evident enjoyment of his superiority.

"Do not go on with those grand, calm ways at me!" she cried, her eyes sparkling. "I know you want to get rid of her—I know you do; I know she is in your way. What will you give me if I help you to put her out of it for ever?"

Her penetration startled him a little.

"Thank you," he said, carelessly; "but what can make you think that I want to—actually to get rid of—I am ashamed to use the words—of Miss Dorrien?"

"Because she no longer cares about you, and that you know it," she answered audaciously.

He said not a word. He looked at the cigar he was holding delicately in his left forefinger and thumb, that its fragrance might not annoy the lady in whose presence he stood; then suddenly raising his eyes, he fastened their gaze full on her face. They exchanged a long look, such a look as they had exchanged once when they sealed Antoinette's fate; and this look sealed it again, though for the present not a word was spoken.

"All this is exciting you, mademoiselle," said he. "I shall give your anger time to cool, and perhaps to-morrow—yes, to-morrow morning I shall call upon you—with your permission, of course."

"Yes, come and see me, now that you want me," she answered sharply—"come, Mr. Black.

He laughed with perfect good-humor, raised his hat with graceful courtesy, and so left her.

Cool! He knew well enough that reflection would not cool, but rouse her wrath to fury, so that, like the waves of an angry sea, it would rise higher and higher, until not a stray gleam of reason would be left to pierce its gloom. What he wanted was to give Mademoiselle Mélanie time to fashion her revenge into some practicable form or other, which he might use in moderation; for her cruel, savage nature was wholly foreign to his. He could be pitiless enough in his way, but he was not needlessly so, and, provided that he could get rid of Antoinette, what more did he want?

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ANTOINETTE had borne up till then, but this evening she broke down. To meet Oliver so frequently, and on such terms of close intercourse, was more than she could bear. Mrs. Reginald, passing by her door, after Oliver was gone, heard her low sobs and moans, and, after listening awhile with a face of much gravity, she retraced her steps and went straight to the library, to which John had repaired as soon as the party broke up. Mrs. Reginald never entered the library, for, when John went there it was to work; but for once she broke through the rule, and if John was surprised at her unexpected appearance, no less was she surprised to find that John was not working, but sitting back in his chair, at some distance from his desk, and evidently lost in thought.

"Don't be alarmed," said she, as he started at her appearance; "your mother is all right. I only want to know if you can tell me what ails that child. You have been getting on pretty well with her this winter; perhaps you know why she is sobbing in her room as if her heart would break."

John looked disturbed.

"I know of only one cause of trouble to her," he said, after a pause. "Mr. Dorrien will not allow her to see her aunt."

"Before I believe that any one can ever sob and moan

for that person—" indignantly began Mrs. Reginald; then breaking off, "Say something else, John."

But John had nothing else to say.

"You don't think," said Mrs. Reginald, knitting her eyebrows—"you can't think that she can be fretting about that little Mr. Black?"

A painful flush covered John's pale, intellectual face.

"If you mean that she cares about him," he replied, "I feel almost sure that she does not."

"Then, John, take the advice of a friend," said Mrs. Reginald, very earnestly. "No shilly-shallying, no time-losing, John. She is a good child, though she has been so badly reared, and the man whom she likes can turn and lead her the right way. Besides, it *is* time," added Mrs. Reginald, impressively, "that you did see about the partnership. Mr. Dorrien's health is uncertain," she continued, as she rose, "and that alone ought to make you take care of yourself."

"I believe you are right, Mrs. Reginald, thank you kindly," said John, abstractedly; but, to say the truth, he was thinking of Antoinette's sobs and tears, and not of Mrs. Reginald's well-meant advice.

"John, if you will not think of yourself, think of your mother," persisted Mrs. Reginald, raising a warning forefinger at him.

"You may be sure that I will," he replied, very earnestly; but when she was gone he relapsed into his communing with his own thoughts, and they bore no rose-colored hue just then.

"A good boy, but an obstinate one," thought Mrs. Reginald, as she went up-stairs. "I wonder how *she* is getting on now?"

She paused again at Antoinette's door, but no sounds of grief now came from her room. The passionate outbreak was exhausted, not, however, without leaving traces of its passage behind.

Antoinette looked very pale and ill the next day, and with every day that passed she looked worse. John spoke to Mr. Dorrien, who looked rather wearied at having to think about Miss Dorrien's health, but who said:

"Let Dr. Parker be called in, by all means."

Dr. Parker came, spoke of debility, ordered quinine, and

hinted, but cautiously, about the *morale* being affected. M. Dorrien heard him coldly, but had no doubt, since Dr. Parker said so, that Miss Dorrien wanted to be strengthened.

Quinine not having restored either Antoinette's color or her spirits, John took an early opportunity of speaking again to Mr. Dorrien, on that gentleman's return from a short excursion to the northwest of France.

"Miss Dorrien is no better, sir," said he.

Mr. Dorrien was sorry to hear it.

"Dr. Parker came for my mother while you were away, and saw Miss Dorrien again. He found her weaker than before, and suggested that a change would do her good."

"And how can Miss Dorrien have a change?" coldly asked Mr. Dorrien.

It had become a fixed idea with him of late that *he* wanted a change, and he thought it a piece of presumption in a young thing like Antoinette to put herself on the same footing with him. Undeterred by his cold looks, John persisted.

"My mother could take her down to the sea-side," said he. "Mr. Black went to Saint-Ives some time ago, and he said something on his return which reminded me of a cottage to be let near it. It belonged to a worthy old man who has been dead some years, and his house is now let, furnished, to sea-side visitors. It would be cheap enough at this time of the year, and it is a quiet, pleasant place."

"And Mrs. John would stay with Miss Dorrien?" said Mr. Dorrien, who had heard him with a half-smile. "I suppose you would take them down?"

"I could go down with them, stay a day, and come back the next."

"Just so. Well, I see no objection to your plan, John. You can say so to Miss Dorrien."

It was close upon the dinner-hour, and John, guessing that he should find Antoinette in the drawing-room, went there at once.

She was sitting by the window, pale and listless, when the door opened. She gave a look round, saw John, and turned back again to her apathetic contemplation of the garden. There was no welcome in her bearing; but, heedless of this, John Dorrien went up to her, and, taking a chair, sat down by her side.

"How do you feel to-day?" he asked.

"Oh, very well," she answered, resignedly. "Thank you," she added, after a pause.

"Would you like a drive with my mother?" he suggested.

"I think I should prefer staying within, please," she answered, languidly.

"Or shopping with Mrs. Reginald?" he persisted.

"But I hate shopping!" said Antoinette, almost crossly.

"Or there is a new great singer, shall we go and hear her to-night?"

A faint light shone in Antoinette's dark eyes, but died away almost at once. If she went to the theatre, might she not see Oliver there? The mere thought sickened her.

"Thank you, John," she said, relapsing into her languor, "but I do not care about the play just now."

"What do you care for?"

"Nothing."

She folded her hands upon her lap, and uttered the dreary word with sorrowful apathy. John Dorrien looked at her attentively awhile, then said, quietly:

"I hope you follow the doctor's prescriptions?"

"Yes," she impatiently answered; "but what is the use? I tell you, John, that I am not ill."

She sighed wearedly, for she was not ill, indeed, and she knew it. Her ailment was that of an unconquerable sorrow. She had committed a great, a fatal mistake, and she could not forgive herself for having done so. Her love for Oliver Black, once her delight and her pride, was now the humiliation of her daily life. She could forgive herself for having taken a bad man to be a good one, but the sin for which there was no remission, and of which she felt the daily sting, was that of having abetted his treason. She had not gone as far as he wished her to go, but she had allowed him to make her daily life a lie. Cruel, intolerable thought! And it was a lie of which the consequences were full of mischief, not to herself merely—that she could have endured—but to others. She had been to Oliver Black that tempting opportunity which even the wicked need for sin. If she had scorned the concealment, without which he was powerless, Oliver would have slipped out of

their engagement, and never attempted to take John Dorrien's place. That had been his object from the first—Antoinette knew it now—that was his object still; and, unless by a treason for which John himself would scorn her, she could avert nothing. John suspected, but he did not know, and she could not put the proof he needed in his hands. She could not say: "Take care; the friend you brought here is a traitor. He robbed you of the bride that had been promised you, and now he will rob you of Mademoiselle Basnage, and your position here if he can." Not one word of all this could she utter. Silence was her hard, hard lot, and that silence and the remorse on which it fed was the illness of Antoinette—the ailment for which no doctor could find a cure.

"Antoinette," said John, after a while, "would you like to leave Paris?"

"How so?" she asked, with a look of doubt, but also of sudden animation.

"The doctor suggested that change of scene might do you good, and Mr. Dorrien is willing that you should try the experiment. There is a pleasant little village on the Norman coast near Saint-Ives. I could take you down there with my mother, leave you both for a fortnight or so, and then go and fetch you."

A flush of joy rose to Antoinette's pale cheek. To leave the city in which Oliver dwelt, the house where, do what she would, she could not avoid seeing him; to be far away by the sea-side, on breezy downs, in green fields, far from the hateful past and bitter present—all this, even though it was only for a fortnight, seemed a heavenly relief from misery.

"O John!" she cried, her eyes filling with grateful tears, "how good you are! I shall like it so much—so much!" she could not help repeating, in the fervor of her gratitude.

Mrs. Dorrien was pleased at the prospect of a change, and expressed herself willing to take charge of Antoinette; her only regret, she said, was to leave Mrs. Reginald behind.

"Never mind me, dear," cheerfully replied her friend, as she helped her to pack up on the morning of the departure—for the journey thus quickly decided upon suffered no

delay—"never mind me, I say. Enjoy yourself, and don't keep John longer than you can help."

"But the dear boy will want a change too," answered John's mother, in an injured tone.

"Yes, yes; but don't keep him, and don't let him lose time philandering with Antoinette—that's all."

"Oh, there's nothing of that kind," said Mrs. Dorrien, with a sigh. "He and Antoinette seem very friendly, but yet—"

"Well?" said Mrs. Reginald, looking up from the trunk, and seeming interested.

"Yet they don't get on, and I wish they would, if it were only for the sake of the partnership," added Mrs. Dorrien with a fresh sigh.

"Perhaps they get on better than you think," shrewdly suggested Mrs. Reginald. "Young things are awfully deceitful."

"But I asked John, dear, and he was obliged to confess there was nothing yet between them—not a word."

"Bless you, dear! they sometimes never get on better than without talking. They are so 'cute."

"Yes, but it would be so much more comfortable if it were all settled. I wonder Mr. Dorrien does not bring matters to an issue."

"Not in a hurry," dryly said Mrs. Reginald. "Never was."

"And yet so kind as he has been, dear; so willing that Antoinette should go and John accompany her! I thought he would have made difficulties, whereas he did not raise one objection."

Mrs. Reginald looked up at the ceiling, and tightened her lips, as if firmly resolved not to contradict, nor yet to assent. Still the temptation to utter a protest could not be resisted, and she said, significantly:

"Very true, dear, but for all that don't keep John, and don't let him stay either. Don't look uneasy, dear. Only business is business, you know."

This incontrovertible proposition closed the discourse; but, though the uneasiness which Mrs. Reginald's remarks had vaguely roused passed away from Mrs. Dorrien's mind, it remained under a very definite shape in the mind of Mrs. Reginald herself. We know how that lady had discovered

some time before this that "something was going on." What that something was she began to suspect on the very morning of the journey.

Before going out Mr. Dorrien had informed her that he would not dine at home this evening.

"I understood that Mr. Brown was to stay to-day, Monday," remarked Mrs. Reginald. "I believe it was on Friday you told him that you 'wanted him to talk over something.'"

"Oh! very likely," composedly answered Mr. Dorrien; "but we are both going to dine at Monsieur Basnage's, and to talk over that very matter. Thank you for reminding me, Mrs. Reginald. I am sorry you should be left alone, but I did not anticipate that our friends would forsake us so soon."

And, with his most courteous smile, Mr. Dorrien bade her a good-morning.

"Both going to dine at Monsieur Basnage's!" mentally ejaculated Mrs. Reginald. "I thought there was a coolness in that quarter."

"Well, Mr. Brown," she could not help saying, as she met that gentleman in the hall a few minutes later, "every one is forsaking me, it seems. I have a nice evening before me alone in this great house."

"I am sorry I cannot keep you company, Mrs. Reginald," answered Mr. Brown, cautiously, "but I have an appointment—an appointment, Mrs. Reginald."

"Oh! you have, have you? With Mr. Black about the Morghens?" suggested Mrs. Reginald, with cutting sarcasm, for she had got to include Mr. Brown's engravings in her dislike of Mr. Black.

A gleam of dry humor shot into Mr. Brown's dull eye.

"Well," he said, yielding in a weak moment to the temptation of a joke, "you know, Mrs. Reginald, that, when Mr. Black and I meet, we must talk of the Morghens."

Mrs. Reginald stood petrified. Mr. Brown, as she had often told him to his face, had not as much imagination as would invent a lie the size of a pin's-head. If he said or implied that he was to meet Oliver this evening, the inference was clear—Oliver, too, dined at Monsieur Basnage's. Just as John Dorrien might have dined, if he had not been going to Normandy. And he, the stranger, the interloper,

was actually going to meet Mademoiselle Basnage in John's stead! Monsieur Basnage's daughter might be a doll, as Mrs. Reginald had so often asserted; but she was at least a doll belonging to, or destined for, or proposed to, John Dorrien, and that little Mr. Black should sit at the same table with her was not to be endured.

"Mr. Brown," severely said the angry lady, "you are acting a part unworthy of you, and, mark my words"—here her forefinger was raised—"you will repent it."

"Mrs. Reginald!"

"You are helping out that little Mr. Black, and all because he got round you with those Morghens of yours, which are no more Morghens than I am, Mr. Brown."

"Mrs. Reginald, they are authentic," exclaimed Mr. Brown, much offended.

"You are helping him out against that admirable, true, upright John Dorrien, whom you have known from his boyhood; and, mark my words, you will repent it."

So saying, Mrs. Reginald left Mr. Brown, who was too much displeased at the slight cast on his Morghens to inquire into the meaning of her warning.

But of this significant incident no one save Mrs. Reginald herself was aware; and, an hour later, John, his mother, and Antoinette, were leaving the Hôtel Dorrien, and driving to the Saint-Lazare station. For many days Antoinette had not felt so light-hearted and happy as when she stepped into the carriage that was waiting for them at the foot of the *perron*. She could have sung in the gladness of her heart; and, when they passed under the arched gate-way, and got out into the gloomy street, she thrust her head out of the carriage-window and nodded a triumphant adieu to the old house; but quickly the light died from her eyes, the smile from her lips, and the gladness from her heart, as in the street below, standing close to the wall to let the carriage pass, she saw Oliver Black. He threw away his cigar as he saw her, and raised his hat to her with grave and ironical courtesy, and Antoinette shrank in with a sad, dismayed look, the triumph of her departure all gone.

"You seem quite faint, dear," said Mrs. Dorrien, in a tone of concern.

"Oh! no; I am so well, thank you," answered Antoi

nette, trying to rally, and look bright, and failing signally in the attempt.

But distance is a great enchanter, and, though her feeling on seeing Oliver had been, "What is the use of going away, since I must come back to where he is?"—Antoinette could not help putting her trouble by, as she leaned back in a railway-carriage, and looked at the green landscape on either hand. Oh! surely, surely in a world so fair, where the sky was so serene, and earth was so lovely, where a beautiful river flowed in the shade of silvery willow-trees, and picturesque old towns rose on the slopes with their cathedral towers glittering in the sun, in a world where there were so many happy homes, pleasant villas with lawns and gardens, quaint châteaux with high roofs, weathercocks, and formal-clipped trees—in such a world as this there was room for Antoinette and her little bit of happiness?

The sun was setting, a ridge of fire, behind the low green cornfields, when John said:

"We get down here."

"Is this La Chapelle?" asked Antoinette, looking round her, and seeing only a little station in a lonely-looking spot.

"This is Saint-Ives," answered John.

Antoinette saw Mrs. Dorrien look at her son, and she saw John's grave face and earnest eyes. That name of Saint-Ives had called up many a vision from the past which she could not even guess at. She had heard, indeed, of the Abbé Véran's famous school, but Mrs. Dorrien's obscure and penurious widowhood, John's restricted childhood, his ambitious youth, and its passionate hopes, had only been partly revealed to Antoinette.

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Dorrien, looking wistfully up in her son's face, and pressing his arm.

John did not answer. He was not thinking of the dream he had relinquished, he was not looking back and pining for the days that might have been—but, as he gazed on a vacant spot before him, he seemed to see a man with a dark face and iron-gray hair, he seemed to hear a hearty voice, with the warm Irish accent, calling out:

"Good-by to you, John, my boy! Good-by!" Saddest of sad words—sad even if they who speak it meet again;

for does not every parting take a link out of the chain which binds our lives here below?

A railway-omnibus conveyed the travelers along a quiet, lonely road, to a pleasant-looking little village, clustering round an old gray church—and this was La Chapelle. It was twilight when the car rolled into an inn-yard, and they all alighted.

"I smell the sea," said Antoinette, with sparkling eyes. "O John, may I go and see it presently?"

"Yes, surely," he answered, pleased to see how much better she was looking already.

Mrs. Dorrien, however, was both cross and tired. She liked Antoinette, but John had been far more attentive to that young lady than she fancied. She wished him to marry Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter—of course she did; but was that a reason why he should be so wrapped up in her? In short, that jealousy which seems a part of maternal love, was awakening in Mrs. Dorrien's breast, and exercising some ravages there.

"Lean on my arm, little mother," said John; and the kind, familiar tone, and the kind gray eyes, soothed the poor lady at once; but on recovering her good-humor she became doleful.

"I wish we had dear Mrs. Reginald here!" she said, with a sigh. "I shall be dull without her, I know. Dear Mrs. Reginald! I don't suppose there is another like her."

They were going up a steep path, with tall trees on either side, a shady path, with here and there a hawthorn-hedge, or a bramble-bush, with high ferns, and a wealth of wild spring flowers—a path loveliest when the sun is out, and when patches of blue sky look down at you through the green boughs, but also beautiful, mysterious, and cool, in the grayness of the fading day. Antoinette, who had just seen a nest of primroses, uttered a cry of delight.

"O Mrs. John," she said, "look at them! they only grow up in the mountains with us, and look at them here."

"I am talking and thinking of Mrs. Reginald, and not of primroses," replied Mrs. John, aggrieved; and then, as Antoinette looked penitent and sorry, she suddenly softened.

"Do not mind me, dear," she said, kindly; "but no one ever has had such a friend, I suppose; and I think it so hard that she should have been left behind."

"Do you think she would have liked coming, little mother?" asked John.

To which Mrs. Dorrien replied, with some asperity, that it would have been no use for Mrs. Reginald to like coming, since she had never been asked; and that, of all cruel things, the most cruel was that Mrs. Reginald should never have a holiday.

"This is the house," said John.

Antoinette looked eagerly at their new home. She saw a thatched building, long and low, surrounded by an orchard of fruit-trees in blossom. Tall beeches hemmed it in, and only a wooden palisade divided it from the path. As John lifted the latch of a low gate, a door opened, and a bright young woman came out to meet them.

"I am so glad you are come," she said, volubly. "I dreamed last night that Nicholas was driving the car into the sea, and it made me quite unhappy all day."

"Did you think he had driven us into the sea?" asked John, gravely.

The young woman raised her eyebrows in amazement at the absurdity of the question. Why, Nicholas was the best driver for leagues and leagues, she said, and as to driving into the sea, he must first go into the village.

"Then what meaning did you attach to your dream?" asked John, as he led his mother into the house.

"Why, none, of course," replied the young woman, impatiently. "But dreams are dreams, though Parisians will laugh at them."

They had entered a pleasant dining-room, where the cloth was laid, and every thing spoke of dinner and welcome. Mrs. Dorrien's face cleared.

"How nice!" she murmured, with a sigh.

No less pleasant did she find her bedroom. Antoinette was simply charmed with hers.

"O John, only think," she said, when they met again in the dining-room, "I can touch the blossoms of one of those beautiful trees when I open my window."

The dinner was plain, and soon over. As soon as the meal ended, Mrs. Dorrien said, with a wearied sigh:

"I think I shall go to bed, John. You may take your cousin to the sea. I mean that you need not mind leaving me," she added, with a resigned sigh.

"O John, will you really?" cried Antoinette, jumping up quickly.

"Ay, that I will, and at once, too," was the ready answer; "but wrap yourself well, for this sea is not the Mediterranean, Miss Dorrien."

She ran to her room in joyous haste. She came out again flushed and eager; for, oh! if they should be late—if they should not be able to gaze at the sea before the morrow!

"Dreadful calamity," said John, laughing; "and yet it will keep, Antoinette! This way," he said, as they passed out through the gate, and struck at once by a field of young corn.

The air was keen but pure. Not a cloud dimmed the evening sky, but a soft gray mist already floated over the landscape. How beautiful, how fresh, how cool and green, did this northern land look to the eyes of the southern girl. As they went through the silent fields, and caught a glimpse of a thatched cottage here and there, with its twinkling light, and thread of smoke rising slowly in the silent air, for this was supper-time, Antoinette broke into fresh raptures, which it did John good to hear. But the sea, where was the sea? she asked, ever and anon. Bidding her be patient, he led her down a steep path, dark and uneven, and then all suddenly they came out at the back of the village, and the lonely beach and the wide, calm sea were before them.

No one in France goes to the sea-side in spring, and, so far as visitors went, La Chapelle was deserted. The natives do not care for the sea, and only a few boys were playing on the shingle. The Casino, a square stone building, was shut up, and the bathing-machines were not yet brought out. Only an old coast-guard was prowling about, with a listless, lounging gait.

"And that is the ocean!" exclaimed Antoinette.

"The ocean! No, only the Channel; but I see you are not impressed. Come down here."

A few boards thrown over the shingle made descent easy till the sands were reached. The tide was out, but it had left many a pool behind, and white bare rocks, like giant bones, and brown rocks, all covered with green and slippery sea-weed, stretched their desolate waste to the low

horizon. The sun was set, but a deep crimson line showed where the track of his fiery car had been. Above spread a dark-blue arch, melting into a pale zenith, sprinkled here and there with a white star. The gray cliffs rose on either hand, looking faint and ghostly in the mist which came floating toward them from the sea. This lay as quiet in its distant bed as if it were lulled in the tideless cradle of the Mediterranean, and its waves were to beat forever, day after day, on an unchanging shore.

The glorious coloring, the lovely landscape, the mountains, laden with verdure, and bending their green heads to the sea; the graceful palm-trees and fragrant myrtles of Antoinette's old home, were not here, but, in their stead, a low, moaning waste of waters, making their murmur in a long edge of white foam to the barren and austere shores of a northern land.

"O John! it is very wild and very grand," said Antoinette. "Can we sit down?"

They rested on the edge of shingle, and the fresh salt breath of the sea came to them in slow but steady increase as the returning tide advanced. Antoinette watched its progress, so slow, so sure, with almost breathless interest, and not till it beat almost at their feet could she bear to rise or go away. She was silent as they went home, and when they reached the house she paused on the threshold to say:

"How long are we to stay here, John?"

"A fortnight—three weeks—a month, if you like. I mean you and my mother—for, of course, I shall go, as agreed, after to-morrow."

"Fifteen days—twenty-one—thirty, perhaps," thought Antoinette. "Oh! I shall be too happy!—too happy! it cannot be true."

CHAPTER XL.

A BLACKBIRD was singing very sweetly far away when Antoinette woke the next morning. She had not closed her shutters, and an apple-bough, laden with blossoms, was

bending toward her window, as if to bid her good-morning. She quickly opened it, reckless of the cool sea-breeze, and gazed with delight on the blooming orchard. It lay before her in freshness, dew, and sunlight, a picture so pleasant and so fair that it almost took her breath away to see it. Antoinette dressed as quickly as she could, and very softly —for it was early yet—she stole out of the silent house. As she passed through the tall grasses, leaving a waving track behind her, a startled brown rabbit, who had been used to take his breakfast there undisturbed, scudded away in great haste, and vanished in a moment. A world of daisies, buttercups, and orchids, lay at her feet; the tender boughs of the blossoming trees met above her head, and here and there streaks of the morning sunshine stole in, shedding their pale gold on the green earth. Early as was the hour, the bees were out at work already. Their low hum guided Antoinette to a retired nook, where she saw their yellow hive, and, standing still, she watched them at a distance.

"I wonder at what o'clock they get up?" said John's voice behind her.

"Earlier than you, sir," she answered saucily, and turning her beaming face upon him.

She looked as well, or almost as well, as ever. It seemed as if, by merely leaving Paris, and the chance of meeting Oliver Black, behind, she had also left ill health and low spirits. With the wonderful elasticity of the young, she had got back in a few hours her blooming cheek and buoyant spirits. The change was so great that John could not but be struck with it; but, because he was so struck, he said nothing about it.

"Yes, bees are early risers," he answered, "and hard workers, too; but we are here for a holiday, and have nothing to do with earning our breakfast, or getting it ready; let us look about us before we go in to it. Come this way, and I will show you something worth seeing and remembering."

He took her to the other end of the orchard. A rustic bench stood in the shade. There was a great gap in the trees that inclosed the place, and through that gap they saw the valley below them. They sat down on the bench and looked at the picture, framed in an arch of dark green: a little pastoral picture, without one grand or striking feature in it, but cool, shady, and pleasing to the eye. Little

thatched cottages, brown, and many of them like birds'-nests, and, like them, half buried in bushes and young trees, were scattered here and there on the slopes. One, white-washed, and shining in the sun, stood on the very edge of a narrow brook that ran along the valley, and was half-hidden by tall trees. The morning mists were rolling away from the low hills, the dappled clouds were melting from the sky, a crowing of cocks and cackling of hens rose from every farm-yard, and the pleasant voices and merry laughter of children mingled with all these sounds of awakening life.

"How charming!" cried Antoinette. "Oh, if there were but a painter here!"

"When I was here some years ago," remarked John, quietly, "a painter was painting the very view before us."

"Then you have been here before, John?" said Antoinette, surprised.

"Oh, yes," he answered—"very often."

He said no more. He never willingly touched with her on that part of his life in which there had been an Oliver Blackmore. So Monsieur Latour, and his intended but never-begun picture of Calypso on the sea-shore, and that day, which John could not but remember, as he sat by Antoinette, remained buried in the past—that silent past which we will all carry about us, and tell to the ear of God alone. Antoinette did not suspect that all she now gazed on was darkened by the shadow which it was to her a relief so entire to escape. Oliver had told her very little about himself, and had never dwelt willingly on his early friendship and intimacy with John. It did not occur to her to connect him with this place. She enjoyed that morning hour, and laughed and talked freely with John, and ran out with him in the fields outside the house, to catch a glimpse of the blue horizon; and came in again to meet Mrs. John Dorrien at breakfast, and give her breathless and enthusiastic accounts of the morning. It was all very delightful—oh! so delightful! There was only one sad drawback—John was going away to-morrow.

"Yes," sighed Mrs. Dorrien, "that is a pity. Poor John was always a victim to business."

But poor John only laughed, and would not be pitied, and asked what he should do if he had not business to engross him.

"Ah! it is all very well," sighed Mrs. Dorrien again, "but I have not forgotten that you were first at Saint-Ives, and that there was nothing that you could not have achieved, and now it is only note-paper and envelopes and money that take up your mind."

"You cannot help regretting it sometimes!" exclaimed Antoinette, looking at him.

"I never look back," said John. "I hold that to do so is the merest folly of which a man can be guilty."

He spoke cheerfully, and spoke as he felt, and his brave spirit did Antoinette good.

"Why should I look back?" she asked of herself; "why should I not look forward, and do my best to mend the past?"

But she did not ask herself how that fatal past was to be mended, nor what that forward was to be. With the happy shortsightedness and confidence of youth, she felt sure that all would be right again, and she could not see the breakers ahead.

John had some letters to write, but, when these were dispatched, he was free once more, and went out with Antoinette. They wandered together in the pleasant green country, through fields, along roads, by lanes; and when they turned homeward the path they took brought them within view of the château which had once belonged to Mr. Blackmore. John wanted to pass on, but Antoinette detained him. "Oh! do let us look," she said.

The old red house rose before them in the warm sunlight; the tall trees behind it waved their airy heads to the western wind, and house, trees, and green surrounding landscape, were set in the pale Norman sky.

"What a quaint old place!" said Antoinette, looking at it curiously. "But who lives there, John?"

"Death," he thought; but he only answered, "No one I believe—it is for sale." And he pointed to the yellow bill stuck on the stone framework of the iron gate.

"'A vendre à l'amiable,'" read Antoinette. "I rather like the look of it, John; and I have a great mind to buy it," she added, raising her eyebrows with a look of consequence.

He laughed, and wanted to pass on, but Antoinette, peeping in through the bars of the iron gate, detained him.

"I do not like buying a house without seeing it first," she said. "May I go in, John, the gate is not fastened?"

"Let us go in if you wish it," he answered, willing as ever to please her.

He pushed the gate open, and they entered. The grass-grown carriage-drive led them to the house, of which the door stood ajar.

"May I just look in?" asked Antoinette, turning round.

He smiled and nodded. She pushed that door open, too, and stood in the hall for a moment.

"I suppose I had better not go up-stairs," she laughingly whispered; "but I may see that room, John, may I not?"

It was the dining-room—a low, broad room, with the cool green light of the opposite trees upon the dark walls, and here and there the gleam of a gold-framed picture upon them. That room had undergone no change since Mr. Blackmore's death; and the chair which the old man had last sat in stood in its usual place, as if still waiting for its master. Antoinette, unconscious that she beheld what had been Oliver Black's home so long, looked round with the careless curiosity of a stranger. In his history of his wrongs, Oliver had not mentioned where lay the dwelling of which he had been despoiled. Such particulars were not needful, and might be awkward. Miss Dorrien had wandered from John's side, and was examining a gloomy bronze clock on the mantel-shelf, when suddenly she gave a start, and looked round at John with a half-frightened face. Steps were coming down the stairs, and a man's voice was saying in French:

"I assure you, monsieur, that your presence, far from inconveniencing us, will be a real pleasure to my wife and myself; and allow me to assure you also that, at this time of the year, the Hôtel de Paris is simply impossible."

"You are too kind," replied a languid voice, which both John and Antoinette knew well, "and I really think I shall accept your hospitable invitation. I shall be able thus to study this mansion again, and see how far it suits my purpose. I should also like—"

Here the speaker pushed the door open, and Mr. Dorrien stood before the pair. Although he knew they were

in La Chapelle, he looked fully as much surprised as they did, and something very like displeasure seemed to mingle with his surprise, for his pale face flushed, an unusual sign of emotion, and his blue eyes lit. John Dorrien had colored too, but he was the first to recover his composure, though not the first to speak. For one minute he stood before Mr. Dorrien, and with that rapid intuition of truth which was one of his gifts, though it availed him so little in life, he saw how and why his cousin was there. It was not merely that he wanted to purchase the house—it was that such purchase was a virtual abandonment of the scheme nearest and dearest to John Dorrien's heart; above all, it was that such purchase could only have been advised by one man, and that with only one object. If Oliver Black wished to see his lost home in the hands of Mr. Dorrien, it was with the hope verging upon certainty that it should ultimately pass into his.

Mr. Dorrien was not the man to shrink from a revelation which might have been delayed, but must have come sooner or later. With a quiet, but rather ironical smile, he was the first to address his cousin, and to say, in his slow, careless way:

"Well, John, are you, too, an amateur? Are you come to compete with or to bid against me?"

"I believe I need not answer that question," replied John, looking gravely at the speaker. "Are you better than when we left Paris, sir?"

"Scarcely," replied Mr. Dorrien, sinking down into Mr. Blackmore's chair, and making an apologetic bow to the agent, who stood looking and listening hard, though not understanding one word. "My dear, I beg your pardon," resumed Mr. Dorrien, addressing his granddaughter; "but you are better already—I can see it. Yes, I feel languid and ill at ease," he continued, fastening his eyes on John's face. "The fact is, I want a change—a total change—and I think I shall find it here."

"You think of buying this place?" said John.

"I do," was the brief reply. "I have all but bought it," added Mr. Dorrien, in a somewhat defiant tone.

"I trust it may suit you," answered John, still grave. "Will you dine with us this evening, sir? My mother will be glad to see you."

"Thanks," was the dry, ungracious answer, "I am tired—I shall spend the night here. Remember me to Mrs. John. I shall do myself the pleasure of calling upon her to-morrow," added Mr. Dorrien, in his old tone of cold courtesy.

"Then we will leave you," said John, with a sigh, which he did not check. "I am going back to Paris to-morrow. Can I do any thing for you?"

But no, Mr. Dorrien had no need to trouble his cousin. Mr. Dorrien had left full instructions behind him, and he was obliged to John all the same; and Mr. Dorrien leaned back in the old leather arm-chair with a wearied air, which said so plainly, "What a dreadful bore is all this!" that Antoinette instinctively drew near to John, and slipped her arm within his. There was no help for it. They must bid Mr. Dorrien a good-afternoon, and leave him; and so they did, the agent still looking at the three with his head on one side, and a perplexed meaning on his face.

They went down the steps in silence; they walked out at the gate without having spoken one word, and they turned their backs on the old house, and left it far behind—so far that neither its tall chimney-stacks nor its background of ancient trees was visible, and still that significant silence was not broken by either. At length John stood still, and he looked at Antoinette, and her heart leaped, and, though she knew not why, she felt that her doom was at hand. She looked around her in the vain hope that some passer-by would delay the evil hour; but no one was coming—not a step was to be heard—not even a bird was twittering on the boughs of the tree near whose aged roots they stood, and whose wide-spreading branches shadowed the lonely lane.

"Oh, have pity on me!" she was tempted to cry—"have pity, John!"

But the words were not spoken, and she gazed resignedly and steadily at a patch of blue sky, and said to herself, "I must bear it."

"Antoinette," said John, after a long pause, "I have something to say to you—or, rather, a question to put. You remember the night when you were out in the garden, and got so wet, and came into the library?—I went to fetch you some wine?—I met Mr. Dorrien, who came back with

me; you had heard his voice, no doubt, for you were gone. I ascertained, after he had left me, that you had made your escape through the next room; but before you left that room, Antoinette, did you hear what passed between Mr. Dorrien and me?"

Antoinette turned pale as death. The dream of happy rest she had been indulging in fled on rapid wing as he spoke, and all the grief, all the shame of her old life, came back with the memory of that night.

"Yes," she answered, after a pause; "I did hear part of what you said; but I left before Mr. Dorrien went away, and so I did not hear all."

"Did you repeat to any one what you did hear?" he asked, hesitatingly. "To Mademoiselle Mélanie—or to any one?"

Antoinette looked at him with the keenest sorrow.

"O John," she said, "I cannot bear that! I know what you mean. There has been some treason or other, and you suspect me of it."

"No, no," he interrupted quickly; "you may have abetted it unconsciously, Antoinette; of any thing deliberate, I acquit you."

"Acquit me of nothing," she answered, bowing her head, while tears streamed down her face. "You do not know how I have wronged you—"

"I know all," he said, without looking at her. "I have seen it all almost from the first day. It has been hard to bear, for he was my friend, and I had some trust in him; but I have borne it, you see. Your share in that I freely forgive. Forget it, Antoinette, forget it."

"Forget the humiliation and the shame?" she cried passionately—"never—never!"

"Forget it," he said again. "It was the error of inexperience and youth."

"No, no, it was worse—it was ten times worse," she said, impetuously. "O John, I will tell you what it was. I stood safe on the shore, but would not stay there. I would enter the worst boat that ever bore human freight, and now I am drifting down a sea of trouble and care, and I cannot help it, and no one can help it. I may reach land again and stand upon the shore; but when I do—when I do—" she paused, and looked in John Dorrien's face—"it

will be after such a wreck of all worth having, that life will seem to be poor—for, John, I shall have ruined you."

She paused, then resumed, in a low, sad tone:

"I have been all wrong, and yet—and yet, if I had had a brother like you, John, I should never have done it—one who would have shown me right, and warned me against wrong. Oh, then I could not have done it!"

She looked up at him with a girl's dangerous adoration in her dark eyes! Poor Antoinette! she had not much of her generation in her; she was warm-hearted, she was ardent and impassioned, and, though she could be guilty, she could never be mean or calculating.

"But you forgive me?" she added, after a pause.

"Entirely," he said, gravely; "but yet let me question you. Mr. Dorrien and I spoke of a business matter, which was then, and is still, a secret. Did you hear us?"

She was silent awhile.

"I believe I did," she answered, "but I am not sure—I do not know. I am only sure that I repeated nothing, John—pray do believe that I did not."

The pathos of her look and tone moved him to the very heart.

"Do not wonder at my questioning you so long, Antoinette," he said, sadly; "but I stand on the edge of a pit, and, though I believe I know the hand that has led me to it, I do not care to wrong even that treacherous hand by an unjust doubt."

They were walking on. Antoinette stood still to give him a scared look.

"Surely, John, it is not so bad as that with you!" said she.

"Surely, my little friend," he answered, in a tone of half jest and half earnest, "you see how it is with Mr. Dorrien and with me?"

"O John, John, do not break my heart!" she cried, full of sorrow. "Let me not think that I have undone you."

He was silent. He could not say that she had not helped to ruin him. He forgave her, but the truth was the truth, and he could not deny it.

"O John! do not think me worse than I am. Let me tell you all," she entreated.

"Not now," said he, with a sigh. "Whatever you tell

me, Antoinette, do not tell me from a passing impulse which you would repent the next moment. Besides, do not think that your telling me any thing can help me now; it is too late."

She was silent.

"And yet," she thought, as they walked on, "I must tell him; not this moment, but this evening, by the sea. I will not betray Oliver, but I must tell him something; I have been wicked, but he must not think me a traitor."

CHAPTER XLI.

Mrs. Dorrien had seen her son and Antoinette depart with very pleasing anticipations. They looked so cheerful and so happy, and a walk in the country was the very thing to bring matters to a crisis. Antoinette's face, as she turned round to give Mrs. Dorrien a last nod, looked decidedly pretty under her little hat; and John's eyes, as John's mother saw with involuntary jealousy, were certainly admiring eyes. No doubt he would speak to his young cousin before returning to Paris, and Mrs. Dorrien did not fear for the success of his suit. She had been watching Antoinette for some time back, and was convinced that the young girl liked her son. There had come a shyness over her in his presence, a certain timidity when he addressed her, which Mrs. Reginald had not noticed, but which Mrs. Dorrien had certainly perceived, and interpreted rightly. Antoinette had not acknowledged it to herself, but it was so. Involuntarily, but none the less surely, she had been learning to give John that place in her thoughts which a woman only gives to the man she prefers. He had become her standard of excellence, her right and wrong, her friend and protector. She mentally appealed to and relied upon him—the worship was not spoken, but it was there; the worship which she had once tried to give Oliver Black, but which, even from the first, he had forced back to its fountain-head. Mrs. Dorrien little suspected the sad obstacle which Antoinette's own hand had placed between her-

self and John Dorrien; she thought that her son had but to speak and win. She was vexed at his dilatoriness, especially at the delay the partnership thereby suffered.

When the pair came in to dinner, grave, silent, and abstracted, nothing could exceed Mrs. Dorrien's dismay. She could put but one construction on a change so great and so sudden; John had spoken, and, incredible though it might seem, he had been rejected. But was it possible? She watched her son and Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter, and, though there was a change in both, she could trace no unfriendliness; far from it. There was something in Antoinette's eyes, as they rested upon John, so mournful and so deprecating that precluded the idea of rejection. And yet if it were not that, what could it be? Mrs. Dorrien was perplexing herself with many useless surmises when, as they sat down to dinner, John said, quietly:

"Mr. Dorrien is here. I wanted him to come and dine with us, but I fancy he felt too tired. He will call upon you to-morrow, little mother."

Mrs. Dorrien was overwhelmed with surprise, but John's further explanations were so quietly given as to rouse no alarm in his mother's mind. She had always wondered that Mr. Dorrien did not indulge himself with a country-house; that he should think of doing so now was a tribute to her judgment which she appreciated.

"Quite right," she said, approvingly; "La Chapelle, I am sure, is a charming place. I am glad Mr. Dorrien has chosen this part of France."

It was plain that she considered Mr. Dorrien's country-house as the future resort of the whole family, and that her approbation was given on that understanding. But as the dinner progressed, and John remained grave, and Antoinette continued to look sad, Mrs. Dorrien's mood underwent a change. She wondered that Mr. Dorrien had kept both his resolve and his journey a secret from her son, and she began to fear that his having done so could bode no good. So uneasy did she grow, that, when John and Antoinette prepared to go out after dinner, in order to have their look at the sea, Mrs. Dorrien, who had declined to join them, suddenly called her son back, apologetically saying to Antoinette—

"Only for a few moments, dear; he will soon overtake you."

Antoinette went on alone. She felt utterly sad and depressed, and walked with slow steps and downcast eyes to the shore. The sky, so blue in the morning, had become overcast, and heavy clouds were drifting above the sullen green line of the horizon. Oh! ye wild northern seas, with the tempest ever brooding above you, how forcibly ye speak to the heart of the tried and sorrowful!

Antoinette sat down on the shingle, waiting for John, and wondering what she should say to him. The tide was coming in with a low, deep roar, and a long white ridge of foam.

She looked at the moaning waves, and she thought over her hard, hard lot. The grand sternness of the lonely shore seemed to forbid all hope of a gentler fate. The sea beat against the rocks, and they frowned back at the sea, wild sea-mews flew past on silent wings, and the low clouds of the stormy sky seemed bending down to the heaving billows, and it was all so vast and so desolate that Antoinette felt, "I am undone, whatever I do. If I tell him about Oliver, he will despise me for a double treason; and, if I do not tell him, will he not think that I was the traitor?"

Either thought was very bitter. She buried her face in her hands, and let her tears flow, till the sound of a step on the shingle roused her suddenly, and she started to her feet, flushed and ashamed to be so seen by him; but it was not on John's pale, grave face that the waning light of that sullen day now fell. That light showed Antoinette the well-known but unwelcome features of Mademoiselle Mélanie. She was too much amazed to speak, and her surprise, and its unpleasant nature, were both so plainly written on her expressive face that Mademoiselle Mélanie, stamping recklessly on the hard stones, uttered a shrill and defying—

"Thank you!"

"Aunt, I could not help it," deprecatingly said Antoinette, timidly, going up to the irritated lady, and attempting to take her hand. "I thought it was John, and the surprise of seeing you took all my presence of mind away."

"You thought it was John!" said Mademoiselle Mélanie, mimicking her, yet speaking with something less of anger. "Then it is John now, and not Oliver!"

"O aunt!" cried Antoinette, turning her burning face away, "never—never talk so. It is not John in the sense you mean, and would that it had never been Oliver!—would that I had never, never seen him!" she added, with a great rush of tears.

Her aunt looked at her, and said, coolly:

"Sit down and listen to me."

Antoinette hesitated.

"Sit down, I say," imperiously said Mademoiselle Mélanie. "Do you think I will bite you?" she angrily added.

There was nothing for it but to obey. Antoinette sat down again and, making a cushion of the shawl she carried on her arm, Mademoiselle Mélanie sat down by her.

"You did not expect me," she began. "Of course you did not; I did not know till yesterday that you were here, and that I would come. And now tell me this, are you really going to marry John?"

"To marry him, aunt? Why, he has never asked me."

"Rubbish! Are you going to marry him?"

"No," said Antoinette, in a low, sad tone. "He does not want me, and I am too proud to want him. I have behaved too badly, aunt."

"Rubbish!" said Mademoiselle Mélanie again. "You are not going to marry Oliver, are you?"

"Never—never!" cried Antoinette, her face all in a flame with the passion of her denial. "That sea shall swallow me first! Never!—never!"

Mademoiselle Mélanie looked at her, and smiled and nodded.

"Then marry John," she said; "marry John Dorrien."

"Aunt, do not speak so. You pain me, and it cannot be."

"You are a fool," said her aunt, scornfully. "You have a chance there. Take it, I say."

"You did not come to tell me to do that, aunt," said Antoinette, looking at her, quietly. "You had some other purpose in coming down here."

"Yes, you little ingrate, I had!" cried Mademoiselle Mélanie, growing exasperated as Antoinette grew calm. "And do you want to know what brought me? I came to ruin you! As I can!—as I can!" she added, tauntingly.

"Well, aunt, you need only tell them what a traitor I have been; and, oh!" she added, bowing her head with shame, "how they will scorn me!

"Oliver Black is a sneak," said Mademoiselle Mélanie, in a tone that showed the absent sinner should bear the brunt of her wrath in his turn, "but I have an arrow in my quiver for him. Marry John, you simpleton, and you can laugh at Oliver. He dare not tell tales, for his own sake."

Antoinette looked at her.

"Aunt, what did you come here for?" she asked. "You had some object. What was it?"

"I came to ruin you," answered Mademoiselle Mélanie, coldly and deliberately—"I came to undo you, because you are the basest ingrate that ever lived—because, the moment you were happy and prosperous, you turned your back on the woman who had reared you—I came for that."

Antoinette heard her calmly enough. She knew of old the violence of Mademoiselle Mélanie's temper, and she got accustomed to every thing—to domestic tempests included. She knew also that, though Mademoiselle Mélanie was both bitter and revengeful, she often left her threats unfulfilled; and she knew best of all that, though Mr. Dorrien had much, John had very little to learn, and so the shame in store for her had not so entire and deep a sting as it might have had if her great error had never been suspected by him.

"I came for that," resumed Mademoiselle Mélanie; "but, after all, why should I do it? Why should I help that little sneak, Mr. Black, up the ladder, for him to laugh down at me when he gets on the topmost rung? I have let him think that I would," added Mademoiselle Mélanie, nodding; "but he let out a thing or two that made me change my mind, as I thought over them coming along. And so now your fate lies in your own hands, and—unless you drive me to it—I will not tell."

Involuntary relief shone in Antoinette's face. To tell John herself, to open her heart and soul in voluntary confession, was one thing, and to be taxed with her guilt, and stand before him, unable to deny it, was another thing, far harder than the first to bear.

"Aunt," she said, taking her aunt's hand, and looking in her face with eyes full of entreaty, "do not, oh! do not tell it. I was wrong, but I knew no better, and—"

"Nonsense!" interrupted Mademoiselle Mélanie, snatching her hand away with a frown—"what folly are you talking of?"

"What are *you* talking of, aunt?"

"Then Oliver did not tell you—of course not—forewarned is forearmed. Mr. Black was too clever to tell, and I—I was a fool to let it out to him."

A great unknown dread now fell on Antoinette. Some calamity, of which she felt the coming, as we feel the coming of the storm, was at hand; but she had no conception of its nature, and Mademoiselle Mélanie seemed in no hurry to enlighten her.

"Marry John," she said—"marry him as soon as you can, or *he* will be too much for you both."

"I shall never marry John," replied Antoinette, in a voice full of sorrow. "I believe he might have liked me, I believe I might have had my chance, but I cast it by, and it will not come back. John will marry Mademoiselle Basnage, or some one else, and why should I complain? I have behaved so badly that I cannot bear to look in his face; and what have I to recommend me, save that I am Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter?"

Mademoiselle Mélanie laughed a long, scornful laugh, which echoed among the rocks and along the lonely shore.

"And are you that?" she asked, mockingly. "Why, you simpleton, do you not know that you are my brother's child, and that I came down here to give you a last chance? Marry John, I say, and do not forget again what you owe to me, or I will make you repent it—I will make you repent it!"

She spoke coolly enough. And, indeed, living though she did in a storm of contradictory passions, she had come to the shrewd conclusion that to spare Antoinette and give up both Oliver and her revenge was the wisest plan after all. What hold would she have on Oliver Black, once he had used her for his own purposes?—and what hold would she not have on Antoinette by telling her this thing, and making her live in perpetual fear of her power? But, plainly though she had spoken, Antoinette seemed unable to realize her meaning—she only looked in her aunt's face and smiled.

"O aunt," she said, with strange tranquillity, "how can you say any thing so improbable and so wild?"

"Oh, it is wild, is it?" cried Mademoiselle Mélanie, getting into one of her sudden rages. "And Antoinette Dorrien, the real one, did not die in Italy, and she was not buried there under her own name, and I cannot prove it; and I am wild, and you are Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter, are you?"

"But why should you have done it?" argued Antoinette, still smiling. "My sister was rich, and it was her death that made us all so poor."

"She was rich, was she?" echoed Mademoiselle Mélanie, looking amused. "Well, you would have been rich, to be sure, if your uncle had not left it all to some one else."

"But, aunt, there was a lawsuit when my sister died—you know there was," persisted Antoinette.

"Moonshine!"

"But surely—surely Mr. Dorrien would have known the truth of all this?"

"Of course he would, if he had asked."

Antoinette looked at her again, and, as she looked, the smile died out of her face. Could this dreadful thing be true? Was she not merely a traitor to John Dorrien, but a poor impostor, standing between him and all that should one day be his? Was there not even between him and her that remote tie of blood which had often made her think, with fond regret, "He is my cousin, after all. We spring from one stem, and are of one race. We are of the old Dorriens, John and I."

She clasped her hands above her head; she cast a look of passionate regret around her, as if appealing to sea, earth, and sky, against her hard lot, and, reckless of the shingle, she laid her head upon the stones and sobbed aloud in her sorrow.

"Don't be a fool," said Mademoiselle Mélanie, who was quite calm; "no one need ever know it. Mind *he* suspects it, but has not an atom of proof, and he is too clever and too keen to speak till he can prove it, which he never can; so just marry John while you have the chance, and behave better to me than you have done."

There was a long pause. Antoinette was still weeping

as if her heart would break, but little by little the violence of her grief expended itself, and, raising her head, she looked up once more, and, turning to her aunt, said, piteously:

"O aunt, say that it is not true! Why should you have done this?"

"For the money, to be sure."

"But I cannot believe it—I cannot," said Antoinette. "I should remember—I know I should."

"And don't you remember that you were called Marie once—don't you remember that?"

"But you said my mother called me so to try to bring back my dead sister to her mind—you know you said it."

Antoinette's eyes flashed with triumph as she spoke, but her aunt looked at her with something like contempt.

"I know you always were the greatest simpleton," she said. "I know you could always be made to believe a lie, and that you never knew how to tell one—never knew how to tell one," she repeated, scornfully.—"Who's that tall fellow coming?" she sharply added. "Is that John Dorrien?"

Antoinette looked. Yes, that was John Dorrien—that was the true owner of the name she had usurped, the real heir of the old house; and he was coming to them with swift and steady strides.

"I have given you a last chance," said Mademoiselle Mélanie, rising. "As you behave to me, so will I behave to you. Take care and do not provoke me, or I shall tell it to those whom it most concerns—to Mr. Dorrien, to John Dorrien—you understand."

"Yes, aunt," answered Antoinette, looking sadly at the sea, "I understand."

Mademoiselle Mélanie had risen, but she was too defiant to stir from the spot till John had come up to them. As she was moving away, after giving him a broad stare, Antoinette rose too. She went up to John Dorrien, she placed her hands on both his arms, she looked up in his face, and, with tears streaming down her pale cheeks, and the most pitiful look and accent, she said:

"O John, she says that I am not Antoinette Dorrien! O John, she says that I am nothing—nothing to you!"

Her voice broke off in tears, and she turned her head away. Amazement kept John silent, and Mademoiselle Mélanie, who had heard every word, turned back in speechless wrath. She had never expected this; she had never thought that the weapon she meant to use would be broken in her hand by Antoinette's first words.

"I do not believe it!" cried John, rallying, and his gray eyes flashing wrathfully on Mademoiselle Mélanie. "It is a mean invention to torment you."

"Oh, take her part—do!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Mélanie, turning upon him. "Do you know that she has been a traitor to you too—as great a traitor as to me? Ask her, and see if she will deny *that?*"

John Dorrien scorned to reply. He looked down at Antoinette, and, as their eyes met, she said with sorrowful simplicity:

"Yes, that is true; you were my friend, John Dorrien, and I have been your enemy all this time."

"Good-night," ironically said Mademoiselle Mélanie, walking away. "Good-night, Mr. John Dorrien; and good-night, Mademoiselle Marie d'Armaillé."

With a short, bitter laugh, in which the bitterness was as much for her own disappointment as in mockery for their trouble, she left them. Not one word did John speak till she was out of sight, and then he said, very kindly:

"Sit down, Antoinette, and tell me all about it."

She sat down as he bade her, and, looking at the sea with her hands clasped around her knees, she told him what Mademoiselle Mélanie had said, but not all; for not to save her life, it seemed to her, could she have uttered to him the name of Oliver Black. John heard her with many a scornful and incredulous interruption.

"Take comfort," he said, warmly, "and do not believe her, Antoinette. The woman is mad, and you have vexed her, and no one—no sane man, woman, or child—could believe a tale so preposterous. You are a Dorrien, take my word for it," said he, taking one of her hands and clasping it; "you are one of us, Antoinette, and—and we will not let you go."

"How good you are, John!" she answered, giving him a wistful look—"how good you have always been to me!"

"Tell me you do not believe her," he insisted.

"Let us go home," said Antoinette, rising, with a wearied sigh; and, looking around her, she added, very sorrowfully: "As long as I live, I shall never forget this spot—never, never! I was so happy here the other evening, and to-day—"

She broke down. He took her arm and led her away.

"You must not and shall not believe her!" said he, with that vehemence which every now and then broke out from beneath the forced outward calmness of his life. "How old were you when the supposed substitution is said to have taken place?" he argued, as they walked along. "Seven or eight! Well, then, it is impossible that you should not remember it. And, if you do not, is it not the surest of sure proofs that this is a poor invention of that crazy lady to keep a hold upon you? Now, just listen," he added, stopping in the steep path up which they were climbing, on their way to the downs, "and see how absurd it all is. Your sister was at least two or three years older than you were; you still wore mourning for her when you came to us seven years ago at the Hôtel Dorrien. How could Mr. Dorrien, Mrs. Reginald, or any one, have taken a child of thirteen for one of ten? It is impossible—impossible!" he repeated, vehemently—"a thing to laugh at, if it were not also a thing to hate for its abominable wickedness."

Antoinette said not a word, but looked at the grassy earth. They walked on; he resumed:

"Besides, do you not see her object? Why, it is so transparent that a child could read through it. Her hold over you is loosening, as it must loosen, for she has no real claim upon you. She is not your aunt; you owe her nothing but some bitter sorrows. The same blood does not flow in your veins, and time and circumstance must happily divide you. By inventing this tie of relationship, she maintains a hold on your affections; she also holds over you a threat which will, as she hopes, keep you in her power. Do you think she will ever go to Mr. Dorrien with this wild story? Never, never!" And John Dorrien laughed the thought to scorn.

Antoinette heard him silently. He thought he had convinced her, but, lest he should not have done so, he was seeking for new arguments when Antoinette, speaking for the first time, said:

"John, is not this the path that leads to the Maison Rouge?"

They stood at the head of a silent lane, shelving down to the village between tall hawthorn-hedges. The fragrant white blossoms filled the air with sweetness, and the cool wind carried it out to the sea, beyond those green-capped cliffs on which the two were now standing. A bird flew past in the gray, dusky air, and far away the sound of a church-bell came floating toward them.

"Yes, that is the path which leads to it," said John, looking at her in the twilight.

"Will you take me to it, John?"

"Why so?"

"I want to see Mr. Dorrien."

"What for?"

"To tell him."

"For the love of heaven, think of what you are doing!" said John, much moved.

"Yes," she answered, with a heavy sigh, "I do." Then she added, "Take me there, John."

"O Antoinette!" he sorrowfully said, "you are undoing us both."

"No, John, not you—not you," she replied, raising her dark eyes to his face with a look of involuntary tenderness.

He was too much distressed to speak. His arguments all failed him now that he saw they had not convinced her; his conscience forbade him to influence her against the dictates of her own. He made but one effort more. The lane grew darker as they went down its rugged path, and the gloomiest part—that where tall trees met and made perpetual shade—was also that whence they could see the old house rising in its hue of dusky red from among its mass of dark foliage.

"Antoinette," he said," with much emotion, "do think of what you are doing. Mr. Dorrien will wish to be just to you, but—"

"John," she interrupted, "from the first day that I entered his house to this, I have been a deceiver. I have not told even you the whole truth—I could not, John—I could not. I cannot tell it to him; but in this thing at least I can be true. O John, let me be true!"

"Be true, then," he answered, with some passion; "and

whoever you are, and whatever you have done, may God bless you, because you will be true!"

He took her in his arms, and, for the first time since they were children, he kissed her sad, pale face. If he loved her, it was something beyond love that he felt just then; and, if she loved him, it was something more than love that made her yield to the caress. After many a wandering in the land of care and error, they were meeting at last on the threshold of a divine passion. They might part again—part forever, though each cast longing looks behind at the other—but they never could forget that moment—never, so long as each had a beating human heart!

"Do not wait for me," she said, slipping away from him; "I shall know my way home."

She went away swiftly, leaving him there, looking after her with eyes full of tenderness, pity, and sorrow.

CHAPTER XLII.

"COME in."

So spoke Mr. Dorrien's voice in surprised tones as, sitting alone in the dining-room where John and Antoinette had left him a few hours before, he heard a knock at the door. The door opened at his summons, and the light of the lamp, by which he was looking at some papers left by the agent for his inspection, showed him the slender figure and pale face of his young granddaughter. He recognized her at once, and looked almost displeased.

"Excuse me," he said, dryly, "I had no conception it was you; I was looking at these papers. What pressing business can bring you at this hour, my dear?"

She paused. His look, voice, and manner, were not encouraging. Mr. Dorrien had never liked her, and he was not in the mood, perhaps, to reject Mademoiselle Mélanie's story. Antoinette's hand was still on the door-handle; she had but to turn it and be out of the room again, and leave it all for another and a better day. But she did not do so.

"I am sorry to intrude, sir," she said, in a low tone,

"but I shall not stay long. Mademoiselle Mélanie has just been here," she added, hesitatingly, "oh! I do not mean in this house; I mean in La Chapelle. She found me by the sea-shore, and talked to me there."

"I thought I had forbidden all intercourse between you and that lady," sharply remarked Mr. Dorrien.

"Yes," said Antoinette, in a low, even voice, "you did, sir; but she came for all that, and spoke to me, as I sat by the sea-shore."

"Was Mr. John Dorrien there?" asked Mr. Dorrien, in the same sharp tone.

"She left me when he came."

There was a pause.

"Miss Dorrien," said Mr. Dorrien, slowly and deliberately, "this thing must never happen again, never, or you will have to abide by consequences which I do not wish to allude to. Once for all, it must never happen again."

Antoinette looked wistfully in his face.

"Perhaps it will not happen again," said she, "for she came to say that I am not your son's child, but my mother's daughter by her first husband. Not Antoinette Dorrien, but Marie d'Armaillé."

Mr. Dorrien, who had risen, sat down again, and stared at Antoinette for a moment in blank surprise.

"This is a most extraordinary tale," he said, rising again, and confronting her. "Pray how does Mademoiselle Mélanie substantiate it?"

"She says that Antoinette died in Italy, and that I was substituted for her there."

"For what motive?"

"For the money."

Antoinette spoke very low, and with shame on her downcast face.

"Yes, of course, for the money," said Mr. Dorrien, with bitter emphasis. "That is to say, if this wild story be true," he added, correcting himself, "which I much doubt —which I much doubt, I assure you, my dear."

He said that he doubted it, but Antoinette, looking in his face, seemed to read there something that was not doubt, something that was more like the dawning of a hope.

"This is no sorry jest, I suppose?" he added, after a pause.

"My aunt was not jesting, sir."

"It is absurd, quite absurd," said Mr. Dorrien, impatiently. "I really wonder that you, Miss Dorrien, should have come to repeat this mad story. Of course *you* know nothing on the subject?" he added, looking keenly at her.

"No, I know nothing," answered Antoinette, sorrowfully. "I was ill when my sister died, and long after it, and I remember nothing, only—"

She paused, and her voice broke down rather suddenly.

"Only!" echoed Mr. Dorrien, with eager, watchful eyes —eyes very unlike those cold blue eyes which he showed in daily life—"only what?"

"Only," said Antoinette, straightening her slender form, as if to nerve herself against the blow her own hand was going to inflict—"only it is like a dream to me, that once, long ago, I was called Marie."

"And that was the name of Count d'Armaillé's daughter?"

"Yes," she answered, looking in his face, "it was her name."

She did not, she could not mistake the flash of glad surprise which came into his eyes, the meaning full of relief that passed over his cold features as he heard her.

"A very wild, improbable story," said he, resuming his usual manner, "but a matter that must be looked into, for your sake. I trust, indeed I feel sure, that, when it is investigated, we shall find that the poor lady has invented or dreamed all this. The mere fact of her coming here to tell you this absurd story shows that she is not in her right mind. Is she still in La Chapelle?"

"I do not know, sir."

"Of course she is—down at the hotel. She cannot be gone, since the coach does not leave till to-morrow; but she may have hired a private carriage. You have no idea at what hotel she is stopping?"

"No, sir, I have not."

"Well, there are but two, so she will be easily discovered. And now, my dear, good-evening, and do not distress yourself. This foolish story will melt away. You did not come here alone, of course?"

"John came with me, and—"

"He is waiting outside, like a true knight, I suppose?"

interrupted Mr. Dorrien, with unusual gayety. "Well, good-night once more."

He held out his hand. Antoinette passively placed hers within it, and said:

"If it be true, sir, I knew nothing about it."

"True? Nonsense! do not think of it."

"I knew nothing about it," she resumed, as if he had not spoken, "but I thought it right to come and tell you at once."

He was going to answer, but the sad gravity of her face silenced him. She did not wait for this feeling to pass away from him. She opened the door, and left the room, without having passed the spot on which she had spoken her doom with her own lips. Mr. Dorrien, though taken by surprise, soon recovered. He followed her out.

"Miss Dorrien, is—is John there?" he asked. "I trust you are not alone?"

But Antoinette did not answer. She was already gone. Mr. Dorrien went in for his hat and came out again. He had soon reached the gate. Antoinette was invisible, still Mr. Dorrien went on, walking fast. He did not think of overtaking her; evidently it was not needful that he should do so. John was with her, of course. Mr. Dorrien was merely going to the village to hear what Mademoiselle Mélanie had to say.

All the time Antoinette was speaking to Mr. Dorrien she had felt like one in a dream, and like one in a dream she walked out of the house, but, instead of going down the steps that led to the avenue, she went out through another door and found herself in a flower-garden. She did not pause for this. Where was she going? She did not know, she did not care, every thing seemed equal to her now. She did not go far astray after all. The garden opened into the grounds, and, from the spot where she entered them, she saw in the pale light of a clouded sky the white road that led to the village. She crossed over it, and had soon reached the high-street of La Chapelle. The old gray stone church stood before her, and she saw its little belfry rise in dark outlines on the leaden sky and in the silent air. The open space around the church was almost deserted, for this was the supper-time, and lights burned in every happy little home. Antoinette stood and gave these

poor dwellings a desolate, despairing look. This was her bitter hour—that hour, scarcely less certain than death, which comes to every human life. She felt like a solitary outcast. She felt that, while every human being in these houses of shingle and thatch was blessed in the sweetest of home ties, she was as one having neither kith nor kin. She stood sad, though tearless, looking straight before her at one light brighter than the rest, unconscious at first that the darkness she was facing was that of the church-porch, unaware that the light which twinkled beyond that gloom belonged to no human home, but was that which burned in silent and solitary worship before the altar. When she knew it, a great, passionate sob heaved her bosom, a great longing for tears and relief came over her. She walked in like a little child led by its father's hand, and how or why she knew not, but she was on her knees weeping and praying to that unknown God of whom the Apostle told the Athenians, and whom she had found at last.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"O MY God, have I found thee!"

In the midst of all her grief, that was the joyful cry which rose from the stricken girl's heart. The soul that has no God is like Mary Magdalen seeking her lost one, and it utters the same pathetic lament: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." And now she had found him, and she could weep and pray at his feet. Faith had come to her at last. Mrs. Reginald's dogmatism had not done much to convince her. Mere reason which cannot define Time and Eternity never bore us safely yet to the awful shores of the Infinite. It ever leaves something untold, something which love alone makes clear, and which it tells best to the heart pierced by sorrow. And love had come to Antoinette. That love which fired the hearts of saints and martyrs, and filled them with raptures and a strange delight, had prevailed over her. In one hour she had lost all and won all. Her earthly inherit-

ance, and with it every latent hope, had perished, but she had got a glimpse of heaven, and, with that glimpse to greet her upward gaze, she felt that she could walk bravely through the thorns and briers of earth. She staid a long time thus weeping, yet happy; grieving, yet without a care; and when she rose at last, and walked out into the open air, there was a calm so perfect in her whole being that she asked herself if trouble or unquietness could ever come near her again. The night had cleared, and the cloudless sky was all bright with stars, and Antoinette smiled up at them with a joyful boast in her heart.

"I am more than you are," thought she; "you may burn on when I am dead, but I am more than you are, and I will not envy you now—oh! never, never!"

"Well," said John's voice at her side, as his arm was passed through hers.

At once Antoinette came down from the heights to which she was soaring.

"O John," she could not help saying, "where then were you?"

"Waiting for you in the church," he answered. "You have seen Mr. Dorrien, I suppose?"

"Yes, I have seen him."

"Well?" he said, anxiously.

"Well," she answered, in a tranquil tone that struck him, "Mr. Dorrien believes it."

"He believes it!"

"Yes, and he wants to believe it, John; and—and—I feel that it is true."

John said not a word; but, after walking on after her awhile, he withdrew his arm from hers, though he still walked by her side. Antoinette's heart sank. Had she really lost all for honor's sake? Was she to be disowned by Mr. Dorrien, betrayed by Oliver, and, hardest of all, forsaken by John, for this sin of which she was guiltless? Perhaps—oh! bitter, most bitter thought!—perhaps he believed that she had been her aunt's accomplice, and that repentance had come with the certainty of discovery. She could not bear the thought, and as they approached the cottage she was going to address him, and utter a pitiful protest, when he suddenly stood still, and, speaking low, said, as he took her hand:

"There is nothing to divide us now—nothing."

She did not understand at once, and, when she did, her first impulse was to save him from his own undoing.

"O John," she cried, freeing her hand from his, "do you think I am so mean as to let you ruin yourself for me? Mr. Dorrien would never forgive you."

"What matter," answered John, "so I have you?"

His voice, though low, was even and deliberate. For the first time, Antoinette felt that he loved her. She had hoped it sometimes; she was sure now, and joy and fear divided her being.

"Do not—do not!" she entreated. "Say no more—tell me nothing—do not tempt me!"

For her whole soul, her whole heart, went forth to him as she spoke these words of denial. What! He whom she had so honored, so worshiped—he loved her! He! the king of her thoughts, the hero of her young imagination—he loved her! It was like being crowned queen, raised up on dazzling heights, and having to sink back, humiliated and discrowned, into unutterable depths of darkness.

"You were promised to me when you were a little child," he said, jealously. "I have held you to be mine all these years. I will risk any thing in this world before I give you up."

Alas! he was very mortal after all, and the girl he liked was more to him just then than the firm of the Dorriens. The love which had slumbered in her breast wakened at the call of his, as smouldering fire kindles into fresh life at the touch of a new flame. But with love came sorrow, so keen that it was spoken in words of much bitterness.

"What is there left of me?" she asked. "For six months I have been steeped in wickedness. Tell me, then, if you can, what there is left of me for a man like you to take?"

John Dorrien was deeply moved.

"Your poor little feet were caught in a cruel net," he said, "but surely you did your best to be free. O Antoinette, let us forget it all now, and be happy at last."

"Oh, I cannot have been all bad!" she could not help exclaiming, "or you would not care for me so much. And yet, how I have sinned against you!"

"What matter, if I forgive it?" he replied.

She knew she ought to resist him, but she did not know how to do so. She knew that her love was a fatal gift, and she could not keep it back, or say him nay.

"Perhaps I shall be better able to hold my own against him to-morrow," she thought. "God will surely help me."

And help did come to her, sooner than she hoped—sooner, perhaps, than, in the weakness of her heart, she wished for it. As they reached the cottage-gate, she suddenly stood still, and with her hand on the latch, "John, John," she said, passionately, "this must not be—never, never!"

Before he could reply, she had passed on and reached the doorway, where Mrs. Dorrien stood anxiously waiting for the belated pair, peering out into the chill spring night with a shawl on her head.

"My dear, I have been so anxious," she began; but Antoinette only passed by her, with a pale, tear-stained face, on which the light burning on the table shone as she went through the room.

"O John, what is the matter?" said the poor lady, looking anxiously at her son.

He could not bear to trouble her, but, chiding her tenderly for exposing herself to the night air, he said, so quietly that her fears subsided at the sound of his voice:

"Were you uneasy, little mother? I am sorry; but Antoinette went again to La Maison Rouge. She wanted to speak to Mr. Dorrien, and—and I fear he was not kind," said John, with a sigh.

Mrs. Dorrien could not help feeling relieved that Antoinette, and not John, was in disgrace. Indeed, concluding, as she did, that Antoinette's difficulties with Mr. Dorrien must all come from some bad behavior of hers to John, she felt little inclined to pity that young lady for her grandfather's severity.

"My dear boy," she fondly said, "I fear that poor child is a great worry to you."

"Perhaps I like her none the less for that," answered John, trying to speak gayly.

It was plain that he would say no more, and Mrs. Dorrien had got accustomed to his reserve, and she submitted to it now, though she would dearly have liked to know what

was going on. She would certainly have questioned Antoinette, could she have had the opportunity of doing so, but the young girl did not leave her room that evening, and Mrs. Dorrien gazed wonderingly at her son, who sat in silence for an hour, staring at a newspaper, and not reading a line, looking by no means depressed, but evidently absorbed in thought.

"John," she could not help saying at length, "what is it? Has Antoinette rejected you?"

"Yes, little mother, she has," he answered, gravely; "but do not trouble about it."

"I am sure she likes you," indignantly interrupted his mother. "I am sure it is all caprice."

"Oh, no, it is not caprice," he said, with a half-sigh; "but, little mother," he added, fastening his kind gray eyes on her face, "she, and not I, must tell you her own story to-morrow."

Mrs. Dorrien so far took the hint that, the moment she heard Antoinette move in her room the next morning, she tapped at her door and asked for admittance, which was at once granted. Antoinette was combing out her long dark hair, and looked as white as her morning-gown. Mrs. Dorrien gave her a furtive look, sat down like one who has come to stay, and said, dolefully:

"My dear, why have you been so unkind to my dear boy? I am sure you like him; and really, when I see how ill you look, and when, as I know, he had no sleep last night, and looked quite worn out when he went out this morning—"

"Where is he gone to?" asked Antoinette, breathlessly.

"To Mr. Dorrien's, of course, but you may be sure—"

"O Mrs. John, he is undone—undone!" cried Antoinette, letting her arms fall down. "He is undone, and it is all for me—for me!" she moaned, throwing herself across the bed in her despair.

With consternation in her looks Mrs. Dorrien now heard Antoinette's story.

"I meant to see him again this morning," said Antoinette, pitifully. "I meant to tell him again that it could never be; and now he is gone, and Mr. Dorrien will never forgive him."

He was gone indeed, gone without seeing her again—

gone resolved to have his way at every cost and every risk. But John, though resolved, was not sanguine. He could not but see that the tide of Mr. Dorrien's favor was setting against him, and he knew well enough that to love Antoinette was not the way to win back his master's favor. He met the agent at the gate.

"Monsieur is not within. Monsieur is in the grounds," said the man, smiling graciously. "If monsieur will take that path it will lead him to the river, and he will probably find monsieur there. This path, not that," he emphatically added, pointing to a little alley, which John knew too well.

With an anxious brow he walked under the shade of those trees which had seen some of the happy days of his boyhood. Mr. Blackmore's genial, handsome face, and portly figure seemed to rise before him, reminding him of past kindness, and pleading for his boy. John Dorrien's heart was bitter enough against the friend of his youth. The Christian virtue of forgiveness is not reached without effort by the fallen Adam within us. To feel keenly past benefits is also to feel keenly a great wrong, and to be betrayed in love, in trust, and in fortune, is more than the most patient of men can bear. So John Dorrien felt strong resentment rising within him at every thing that recalled Oliver, and with him his baseness. Only one thing could lessen that bitter anger, the consciousness that the traitor had never been able to deceive him entirely. From the first he had suspected a secret understanding between Oliver and Antoinette. He had no proof to build upon, but his intuitions of truth were quick and sure, and he was accustomed to trust them. If such was the case, if his friend had robbed him of the girl promised to him, the conclusion to be drawn thence was easy to reach. How could Oliver want Antoinette, if he did not want John's position? But to see this danger had not also been to see the means of averting it. Self-love, moreover, which misleads us all, had led John Dorrien into strange error. He was conscious of his superiority over his enemy, and he had not believed that Mr. Dorrien could commit the mistake of preferring Oliver Black to himself. What! set by not merely his years of faithful service, but also his undoubted talent and energy and past success?—the thing seemed too absurd for a moment's thought! For, after all, what had Oliver to

recommend him?—a pleasing person, a flattering tongue, and doubtful birth, no means, and average talents. Were these the gifts that could replace the name of Dorrien, and the experience purchased by eight years of toil? Was this the dowry which could give a penniless adventurer the hand of Mr. Dorrien's granddaughter? Surely not. So John could look down on the ambitious hopes of his false friend with the scornful amusement of a man whom treason cannot reach. The only doubt he had was of Antoinette's liking. For that he fought keenly; man-like, he wished for her none the less that another had stolen her *from him*. She was his, doubly his. He had brought her to the house, he had taken her from her poor home, conquered her grandfather's reluctance to have her near him, and he would not give her up. So he did his best; not in words, nor even much in actions, but in these hundred subtile ways by which a man, young and pleasing, knows that he can reach a girl's heart. And John was not so blind as not to see in time that he had succeeded. He was not so modest that he did not perceive the involuntary gladness in that girl's face when she saw him, even as he detected, with secret triumph, the cloud of trouble and care that came over it when Oliver Black was by. This victory fully avenged him as he thought against the schemer. John, being secure, could feel very magnanimous, and contemptuous too, for there is a good deal of scorn in your magnanimity. He would not see that, though Antoinette might be won, her grandfather might also be alienated; and he forgot that strange, sad story of the old Grecian days, which is true of all times, the story of the Athenian who wearied of hearing Aristides called the Just.

Even now, when every object he looked at recalled the traitor, John Dorrien had no actual fear for himself. The cloud on his open face, the weight of care at his heart, were for Antoinette, and the resentment he felt was against the man who had thus avenged himself for the young girl's inconstancy. To him, and to him chiefly, did John attribute Mademoiselle Mélanie's sudden revelation; and against him, for that motive chiefly, did he cherish anger as he went to seek Mr. Dorrien. He hoped, faintly, it must be confessed, to influence him and keep her birthright for Antoinette; but, as we said, his hopes were faint, and if they

failed, as he feared that fail they would, he saw much trouble before him. He walked on, calling up every proof he could muster on her side, strengthening his case as best he might, and finding most forcible arguments, if they would but convince Mr. Dorrien, until, at length, he reached that gentleman's presence.

Mr. Dorrien was walking leisurely in the sun, smoking a cigar. He was not fond of smoking, but he had taken to it of late, for a restlessness and a love of change, and of all he had shunned till then, had grown upon him, and altered all his old habits. He took out his cigar, and held out his hand to John in friendly and easy welcome, and he said, with unusual lightness and airiness of manner:

"Well, John, I am perfectly smitten with this place. I never saw any thing so prettily pastoral; you know," with a sigh, "that circumstances, and no choice of mine, made a man of business of me, and all my old tastes are gratified in this little bit of Normandy. That glimpse of water there beyond in shade and sunshine, those old trees and that pale sky, are like a perpetual Gainsborough to look at. I like it exceedingly. Do you?"

"Very much so, sir. I always did like this place, I mean in Mr. Blackmore's time.

"Then I hope you will like it too in Mr. Dorrien's time," cheerfully replied Mr. Dorrien, "for I have made up my mind."

"You mean to purchase it?"

"I do—indeed, my word is passed."

There was a pause. John Dorrien flushed painfully.

"What becomes of the paper-mill, then?" he asked. The question was a useless one, but not for worlds could he have helped putting it. Mr. Dorrien raised his eyebrows, and looked as if he thought that John's paper-mill was in a a very remote landscape indeed. Evidently that Gainsborough was not one he cared to possess.

"I suppose the paper-mill remains where we found it?" he answered at length. "My dear John," he added, waving his cigar, and speaking more airily than ever, "you meant well, of course; but you went wild about that paper-mill—perfectly wild. You always do carry, or want to carry out, your ideas to excess. You are too imaginative. I believe you began as a poet: well, the faculty, a beauti-

ful but unsafe one, of looking at things ideally, clings to you still."

"Excuse me, sir—I brought figures and facts—"

"And I went into both," interrupted Mr. Dorrien, with a touch of impatience, as if the mere recollection bored him exceedingly. "I went into both and found them all wrong. I also examined the matter myself from another point of view, and I found that your estimates would not stand the test of plain common-sense."

"May I ask who found you the facts and figures that led you to that conclusion?" said John, with some indignation.

"Mr. Black. I requested him to do so."

Mr. Dorrien answered John's questions without the least hesitation—in the tone of a master who will admit of no contradiction, and John felt that his position at La Maison Dorrien was an altered one indeed. Still he was too manly and too spirited to give in without a struggle, and he said, in a tone as cool as that of Mr. Dorrien:

"If you will go into the matter again, sir, you will find that Mr. Black, and not I, was mistaken."

Mr. Dorrien looked amazed.

"I tell you, John," he said, fretfully, but much more in his old manner of arguing against his young cousin's views than in that new manner of putting him down—"I tell you that I am tired of extending this business more and more, and that I think it time for me to enjoy some of the fruits of a long life of labor and self-denial. Your paper-mill is an awful risk, and little profit, even if it should prove successful."

"It would put the house out of the power of Monsieur Basnage, and on another footing than that which it has now," warmly said John.

"We will not argue the case out, John," he said, "my mind is made up. Any news from Paris?"

"None. I mean to go this afternoon. I shall leave my mother and Miss Dorrien here, of course."

"Miss Dorrien," echoed Mr. Dorrien, dryly; "you mean Mademoiselle d'Armaillé."

"Are you sure that is so?" asked John, much downcast.

"Quite sure," coolly answered Mr. Dorrien. "I saw

Mademoiselle Mélanie last night, and she quite satisfied me —indeed, gave me a written acknowledgment."

"Is she a person to be trusted, sir?" asked John, rather indignantly.

"Of course not; but there are ways of discovering the truth, and I feel certain—I always had a strange, vague doubt—I feel certain that this poor girl is not my son's child. I have not yet decided what I shall do for her; but of course, having received her in my house as Miss Dorrien, I shall not cut her off, and send her adrift."

"But this may be the merest falsehood," urged John, warmly. "Allow me to ask what proofs Mademoiselle Mélanie brought forward?"

"Allow me not to discuss that matter," interrupted Mr. Dorrien. "I believe I am quite capable of settling my family affairs without any assistance."

His tone, look, and manner, were aggressive; but John took up the glove without a second's hesitation.

"Excuse me, Mr. Dorrien, but does not this matter concern me?"

Mr. Dorrien raised his eyebrows, and was at a loss to understand Mr. John Dorrien's meaning.

"My meaning, sir, is one which you first urged upon me, which you have long known, which the last eight months have rendered dearer to me every day; my meaning is that I love her very much, and hope to marry her.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Dorrien, showing no surprise whatever. "You really hope to marry a penniless girl, the daughter of an adventurer, the niece of Mademoiselle Mélanie? Allow me to wonder at such a hope coming from you, and especially at your choice of a family connection."

"It was your granddaughter whom I chose, sir," answered John, coloring deeply. "That she should not be what we both thought her, is her misfortune, not her fault. As your granddaughter I learned to love her, and I cannot learn to unlove her now."

"Well, you must please yourself," coldly answered Mr. Dorrien; "but, as I always found something that repelled me in this young girl, so would it be positively disagreeable for me to see her in my house; and if you will marry her, why, you must excuse me if I say that La Maison Dorrien cannot be your home. I have no doubt that, with your

talents and industry, you will make your way in the world —but henceforth our paths must lie apart."

From the moment that Mr. Dorrien began to speak, John Dorrien's face took a peculiar and rather sad expression. Attack was coming, and he felt it, as the tree is said to feel the coming of the storm, and he stood erect, silent, and firm to meet it. Yet when the expected blow fell it was so crushing and so heavy that he could scarcely bear it. Scarcely, too, could he believe what his ears now told him. What! he had toiled years, he had given all his youth, mind, and energy, to raise a falling house; and now that it was raised, and he could grasp a fair, well-earned reward, he was laid by, as the tool is laid by when its work is done! He grasped the whole bitter truth in a moment; Mr. Dorrien wanted him no longer, and he took this pretense of Antoinette to get rid of him. He remembered his mother's plaintive, "Why are you not a partner?" He recalled Mrs. Reginald's grave look and warning forefinger, and Mr. Brown's cough, whenever the partnership had been mentioned, and even Oliver's significant advice; and remembering also how, in his generous trust, he had scorned them all, anger, shame, and sorrow, filled his heart. Alas! he had been too much of a poet, after all. He had forgotten that black and white and stamped papers are the man of business's gospel. He had also thought himself indispensable, and, in the confidence and pardonable vanity of youth, he had held his position too secure for the safeguards of common prudence. It was useless to remonstrate with Mr. Dorrien; he knew it, and yet, in his indignation, he could not help doing so.

"Do you mean to say that the partnership which you promised me so long is not to be?" he asked. "Do you mean that, Mr. Dorrien?"

"The partnership!" echoed Mr. Dorrien, very coldly. "The partnership? Yes, of course I do mean that *that* view is at an end between us. Even if you gave up your intended marriage, it would be at an end. This matter of the paper-mill has shown you to be too young and too venturesome for the responsibility. It would be the merest folly in me to give you, with your recklessness, a share in my authority. I beg that, whatever course you take, you will discard that view altogether."

And now John understood, once for all, the man before him. He was indolent, but by no means generous. He had given much power to his young cousin because he liked his ease, but in his heart he had grudged him that dearly-bought authority. He had made himself a cipher in his own house, and he had resented it, though it was his own doing. Oliver Black had not created within him that feeling of discontent—he had only brought it to the surface, and helped it into active life.

"You mean that?" cried John, passionate tears rising to his eyes. "You mean that, after using me all these years, you are going to repay my trust in your honor after that fashion?"

Mr. Dorrien raised his eyebrows, and looked quite at a loss to understand his young relative's meaning.

"This is too absurd!" he said, at length. "You have been very useful—I do not deny it—but for that usefulness you have been amply paid. You were a mere lad, and not a rich one, I fancy, when I took you in hand, gave you a position, and your mother a home. Pray, what more could you expect? I now choose to say that our paths must lie apart, having strong reason so to say—and you assume the tone of an injured man, on the strength of a promise which was never more than conditional."

John was too manly and too proud to contend any longer against his ungrateful master.

"Mr. Dorrien," he said, in a low tone, "I shall thank God if, as you say, Antoinette is not your granddaughter."

An angry flush rose to Mr. Dorrien's pale face, but John was gone before an answer could pass his lips.

The young man had not walked ten steps out of the house, when he found himself face to face with Mademoiselle Mélanie.

"Well," said she, standing still before him, so as not to let him take a step, "what is she?—a Dorrien, of course."

"She is my future wife," said John, whose gray eyes flashed; "and I am sorry to say, madame, that the wife of John Dorrien must be a stranger to you."

Mademoiselle Mélanie laughed, and, taking out her pocket-book, she opened it and showed him a little bundle of bank-notes, which she flourished mockingly in his face.

"Do you see that?" said she. "I got it for telling the

truth at last. The truth is a fine thing. It can bring in money—hundreds—and a few hundreds," continued Mademoiselle Mélanie, whose eyes sparkled as she thought of Monaco, "can bring in thousands and thousands," she continued, looking at him—"could bring in hundreds of thousands, if one had only a little luck."

Here her voice took a regretful ring, and she sighed deeply. John, to whom every word she spoke was a mystery, bowed coldly and passed on.

"My love to Mrs. John Dorrien," said Mademoiselle Mélanie, raising her voice.

He did not answer, and she entered La Maison Rouge in the hope—a futile one, as it proved—of getting a few hundreds more from Mr. Dorrien.

CHAPTER XLIV.

"My poor little mother," thought John, as he entered the cottage, "how will you bear this?"

Alas! Mrs. Dorrien bore it very ill indeed.

"O John," she said, forgetting that Antoinette was there, sitting in a window, with the light falling on her face of deathly paleness—"O John, my dear boy, you have been too precipitate. You should have spoken to Antoinette before you left, and—"

"Little mother," said John, interrupting her, and looking sadly in her face, "Antoinette has nothing to do with all this. She is the pretense, not the cause. Mr. Dorrien wanted to get rid of me."

"If Mrs. Reginald were only here!" exclaimed Mrs. Dorrien, clinging to impossible hope.

"And if she were, mother, she would bid me bear it like a man. — Antoinette," said he, turning to her with a bright, hopeful smile, "will you be a poor man's wife?"

"Surely," she replied, with a quivering lip, "I have injured you enough as it is, without doing you that wrong."

"And will you not understand," persisted John, "that you are only the pretense?"

"I am the cause, too, John," was her sad reply. "Monsieur Basnage could no more forgive you for his daughter, than he could for the mill; and it has all turned against you. I was sacrificed because I would not help to ruin you, and now I must drag you down in my fall."

He heard her with strange sweetness. It was a bitter hour, but she had been true to him longer than he thought.

"Will you be a poor man's wife?" he asked again.

"O Mrs. John," said Antoinette, looking at his mother, and speaking in sore distress, "will you ever be able to forgive me if I say 'Yes?'"

"My dear," answered Mrs. Dorrien, "I think this is a terrible blow; but I know that my dear boy will rise above it yet."

She spoke more bravely than she felt. Some years of ease had unfitted her for the cares of life, and her heart sank at the thought of facing them again. Especially did she grow faint-hearted after John had left them that afternoon.

"I shall soon come back," he said, quietly—"come back and fetch you both. But I have a few matters to settle first. Good-by. God bless you!"

A few matters to settle first! Mrs. Dorrien could have groaned aloud at the meaning these words, so cheerfully uttered, conveyed. John was going to look out for a home for them, and what home could it be? Some dreadful little place on a fourth floor in a house in Paris, shabby furniture, and a *femme de ménage;* and then he would insist on marrying Antoinette at once, she was sure, and a vision of their poor domestic life, with all its trials and miseries, overwhelmed her.

John's own thoughts were hard enough. He knew life too well to indulge in many illusions. He could earn a living, but nothing like the position he had lost could he ever hope for again. It was with a grave face, not gloomy, but full of thought and care, that he crossed the threshold of that old house where he had so long ruled as a master.

The first person he saw as he crossed the court was Mr. Brown. Even in the gray light of evening, he was aware that Mr. Brown's face was troubled and care-worn. Mr.

Brown, indeed, had that morning received, under the shape of a telegram, such a shock as he had never felt before since he had entered La Maison Dorrien. Twice he had headed a letter, "Mr. Oliver Black," and once he had taken off his spectacles, and kept them five minutes in his hand, staring blankly before him.

"How are you, Mr. Brown!" asked John, quietly—"well, I hope? And how is Mrs. Reginald?"

"Mrs. Reginald is very well, sir," answered Mr. Brown—"very well; but she is out, sir."

John made no reply, but went up the steps of the *perron*. Mr. Brown, with something like flurry in his aspect, turned back, and walked up with him.

"Excuse me, Mr. John," he said, "but I have got a telegram—a telegram," and he placed it in John's hands as he spoke.

It was thus worded:

"Mr. John Dorrien no longer member of the firm; receive no orders from him. Mr. Oliver Black has full instructions how to act in J. D.'s stead."

The telegram was dated La Chapelle, and had been sent by George Dorrien to Samuel Brown.

"Well, Mr. Brown," quietly said John, "Mr. Dorrien's orders do not apply, I suppose, to the possession of my private papers in the library?"

"I hope not—I trust not," said Mr. Brown, sorely distressed, and all the more distressed that he knew his allegiance to John had grown weak indeed of late.

"Then I shall go and take them at once," said John. "I shall not sleep here to-night," he added, with his hand on the door; "but my task may be a tedious one; I shall stay late, and I should prefer, Mr. Brown, if you were to remain and take the key of my desk from me, if you please."

"Yes, sir, by all means," readily answered Mr. Brown.

John entered the library. The gray evening light filled the place. He rang and asked for the lamp, and when the servant brought it, Carlo rushed in at the same time, whining with delight.

"I suppose I may take you away, poor little fellow," said John, patting him kindly; "and now lie there—I am busy."

The lamp had been placed on the broad table. Its clear light revealed to John Dorrien that long-silent room, where he had spent many weary hours, and known many heavy cares. He unlocked his desk, and began sorting his papers. Soon the table was strewed with letters, bills, pamphlets, plans for the paper-mill, designs for note-paper, and with all the other tokens of his past life. The task of looking through these papers was a tedious one. Many he kept, some he destroyed; others, with which he had no concern, he put up for the use of his successor. After a while, feeling rather wearied, he leaned back in his chair and rested. The sight of these papers called up some bitter thoughts. He gazed at them as a conquered general may look at the brave dead on the battle-field. The world which hurrahs for the victorious, and laughs at the vanquished, will care little for them. What matter? He who led them on, and who knows how they gave their hearts' blood at his bidding, will think kindly of those poor dead hopes, plans, and schemes, which success might have made so great, which failure has laid in the dust. "And that is the end," thought John, with a sigh—"that is the end."

Yes, that was the end of more than seven years of very hard work. That was the end of a bitter sacrifice, of fervid dreams abandoned, of bright hopes voluntarily extinguished in a proud boy's heart. Had he done well, after all? Do we not often mistake the voice of Duty, and think she calls, when we only hear the echo of worldly wisdom? Had he done well? That, perhaps, was the hardest thought of all in the many hard thoughts which John Dorrien had as he sat alone that night brooding over the irreparable past, and comparing it with what might have been. He looked at the little bronze figure of Polymnia, and half smiled at the cold and serene grace of the young muse.

"If I did wrong to forsake your sisters and you," thought John Dorrien, "I confess that I am punished now, and that Business has been a hard master to me. Oh! if I could go back to you! But no; it is too late—too late forever! The fervor has been wasted, and the faith is gone."

He sighed and resumed his task. He packed up his books. Some had belonged to his father, and had long

stood on the book-shelves of his mother's poor home. How they recalled his childhood and its solitary hours, and that memorable day when he had told his mother that he would rub Aladdin's lamp for her! Others had been bequeathed to him by Mr. Ryan, and with the aspect of their worn and shabby covers came back the studious life at Saint-Ives, and the dangerous worship of his ardent friend. And so time passed; and, when ten struck, the great gate rolled on its hinges, and a carriage entered the yard. John paused, and listened. He guessed that only the master of the house had come in thus. It was Mr. Dorrien, and Mr. Brown had gone forth to receive him —for John heard their two voices as they entered the hall.

"Is Mr. Black in the library?" said Mr. Dorrien—"I see a light there."

"No, sir; it is Mr. John who is there, looking over his papers. Mr. Black came at eight, and left word that he would come back at nine; he has not been yet."

"Send him in to me," said Mr. Dorrien; "but first let me have a few words with you, Mr. Brown."

A door opened, and closed again, the voices ceased, and all was once more silent in the great house. Self-possessed though he was, John felt his brow flush with a stern pain as he heard them. He had not yet left the house, and his place was already filled; and, lest he should not leave it quickly enough, Mr. Dorrien had hurried his return, and was calling Oliver Black to him with indecent haste.

"Let him!" thought John; and his eyes flashed, though he was there alone—"let him! This day still is mine; Mr. Black will not dare to enter this room till I am gone."

He resumed his task composedly enough; by eleven o'clock it was over. He locked his desk, and took out the key. It was still in his hand when the door opened abruptly, and Mrs. Reginald walked in.

"John," she said, excitedly, "you don't mean it! It's all wrong, my dear boy; Mr. Brown has been upsetting me. You can't do it. Think of your mother, you know."

She sat down as she spoke, and looked at John in such evident distress that he did not know how to tell her the

truth. But it had to be told, and his friend heard him out with a downcast look and unusual silence.

"What a villain that little Mr. Black must be!" she said at length.

"And what a fool John Dorrien has been!" said John, coolly.

"My dear boy, you trusted," said she, soothingly.

"And what right had I to trust one who had always been faithless?"

"Ay, there's the rub," confessed Mrs. Reginald, "but young people will be conceited. And so it is all over, and I shall see my dear boy here no more," she added, very sadly.

Yes, it was all over; and John rang, and asked for Mr. Brown, who came, looking much crestfallen, and also much afraid of Mrs. Reginald, by whom he was eyed askance; and he took the key humbly enough, and listened to John's explanations in deferential silence; and, when this was over, John went up to his room, and Mrs. Reginald went up with him, to help him there.

"I shall see to your mother's things," said she, with a sigh. "Poor dear Mrs. John! I shall miss attending to her jellies and chickens and burgundy. I don't know why I should not leave Mr. Dorrien and join you," she added angrily. "I never can sit at the table with that little Mr. Black, you know, John; don't tell me that I can. I shall certainly affront him. Besides, if you marry Antoinette, Mrs. John will want some one for herself—for lovers, as every one knows, are the most odious creatures breathing—John, you don't understand packing, my dear boy. Linen always goes at the bottom, and—who's there?"

"If you please, Mrs. Reginald," said Mr. Brown's voice outside, "will you come down to Mr. Dorrien, if you please?"

"And what does *he* want with me?" asked Mrs. Reginald, with much asperity. "I can tell you, Mr. Brown, that I am not in the best of tempers with Mr. Dorrien just now."

She obeyed the summons, nevertheless, turning back with her hand on the door to say to John:

"Linen at the bottom, John—but I shall be back directly."

"Mrs. Reginald," said Mr. Brown, in a low tone, as they stood together at the head of the stairs, "I think that Mr. Dorrien—Mr. Dorrien, you know, is in a fit, and have you got some smelling-salts?"

"What?" asked Mrs. Reginald, staring.

"I think that Mr. Dorrien is in a fit—a fit," repeated Mr. Brown, with unusual agitation. "I have sent for Doctor Parker, Mrs. Reginald."

Mrs. Reginald strode past him, and was down-stairs in a moment. She opened the door of Mr. Dorrien's sitting-room without knocking, and at once walked to the sofa on which the master of the house half lay, motionless and pale, with fixed eyes and parted lips, and something of his weary, languid look still on his face. She took up his hand—it was inert; she let it drop, and it fell down lifeless.

"Mr. Brown," said she, "Doctor Parker may come and go; some one has been here before him. Mr. Dorrien is dead."

"The signs of death are deceitful, Mrs. Reginald," said the cool voice of Oliver Black.

Mrs. Reginald gave a start of angry surprise as she saw him; she had not perceived him till then, standing by her side with an audacious, defying smile on his handsome face. Her brown cheek flushed, her dark eye sparkled, but she did not lose her self-control.

"Mr. Brown," she said, "go for Mr. John. He is up-stairs in his room. His place is here."

She said no more, but, if there be language in a look, hers said very plainly, "Go, I shall stay here and watch." And after a moment's hesitation Mr. Brown obeyed her behest, for he did think that Mr. Dorrien was dead—his father had died suddenly, before the glass his hand was raising could reach his lips; his son had died with an unfinished letter before him; and Mr. Dorrien had sunk back where he lay while he was talking to Mr. Brown, and giving him orders for the morrow.

So Mrs. Reginald and Oliver Black were left face to face—she at the head of the sofa and he at the foot, with the pale and silent Mr. Dorrien between them: she trying, though she knew how vain it all was, the effect of salts, vinegar, and cold water; Oliver looking on with quiet compos-

ure. The game might be lost, but he would not give it up till his last card had been played out.

Doctor Parker, who lived close by, entered the room at the same time with John Dorrien. One look at the still face, one touch at the hand already turning cold, one breathless pause to listen for the beatings of a heart that had ceased, then an impressive glance at John Dorrien.

"Sir," said he, "Mr. Dorrien is dead."

"Can nothing be tried?—is there no hope?" asked John, looking down sadly and gravely at the face that had sent him forth in such unkindness that very morning, but which had been kind in days gone by.

"There is no hope," replied Doctor Parker. "Mr. Dorrien is dead. You may remember that I foretold this result some months ago, and warned you of it."

John nodded. The room was silent. Doctor Parker was drawing on his gloves. Oliver Black addressed him suddenly.

"I suppose you have no doubt, doctor?" he asked.

"No, sir," replied Doctor Parker, with a stare at this stranger, for he happened never to have met him before, "I have no doubt."

"Then it's all up," said Oliver; and taking his hat he walked out.

Mr. Brown was very much shaken by his master's death; but he was a man of business, and he felt perplexed. He beckoned John out of the room.

"Mr. John," he said, under his breath, "I have a great regard for you, as you know; but Mr. Dorrien's orders were clear, and—and I should not like to disobey them."

"Miss Dorrien is not of age, and cannot take possession in her own person," calmly answered John; "but—"

"Miss Dorrien," interrupted Mr. Brown, looking bewildered—"and is she a Dorrien, Mr. John?"

For Mr. Dorrien had lost no time in telling that story.

"I really do not know," replied John; "but I know that I am the only one who has a right to dispute her title, and that I shall not do so."

"But if she be not really Miss Dorrien," argued Mr. Brown, still perplexed.

"I am one," interrupted John, in his turn; "forget that I was ever any thing in this house, and only remember that

I am the great-grandson of Mr. John Dorrien; and if it be Mr. Black that troubles you, Mr. Brown—if you think that he will claim any authority in this house over the business —refer him to me."

But, to Mr. Brown's great relief, Mr. Black never came, and never claimed the key of John's desk, or the fulfillment of Mr. Dorrien's promise. From that day forth he vanished, not only from La Maison Dorrien, but also from the lives of the inmates, and was known to them no more.

The funeral was over, and John and Antoinette stood together in the garden nigh the river-god, who, careless of death, was bending over his urn, and pouring forth its bright waters into the basin below.

"Then, John," said she, looking wistfully up in his face, "you are master once more?"

"I—oh, I am nothing, and no one. I gave up the key of my desk to Mr. Brown. You are mistress, Antoinette."

"I! O John, was I his granddaughter? You cannot say that you think I was?"

John was silent.

"Then how can I be mistress?

"Who is to dispute your claim, Antoinette? Do you think I will?" he asked tenderly. "Mr. Dorrien made no will. I say it again—you are mistress here."

A great gush of tears came to her eyes; she laid her two hands on his arms.

"Then, if I am mistress," she said, "you are master, John—you are master."

And that was how it ended, and how John was master in the old house once more, and how Antoinette, if she was not a Dorrien, became in time a Dorrien's wife

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